MEMOIRS

OF

THE RIGHT HONOURABLE

RICHARD LALOR SHEIL.

VOL. II.

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BY

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ETC. ETC.

IN TWO VOLUMES.

VOL. II.

LONDON:

PUBLISHED FOR HENRY COLBURN,

BY HIS SUCCESSORS, HURST AND BLACKETT,

GREAT MARLBOROUGH STREET.

1855.

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CHAPTER XII.

1828.

Duke of Wellington, Premier—Birmingham unrepresented—Secession of the Canningites—Declaration of the Premier in the Lords—Refusal to abate agitation—Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald—Return of O'Connell for Clare—Revival of the old Catholic Association—Universal organization—Fears of civil war—Military marchings.

In consequence of a disagreement between Mr. Tierney and Mr. Herries, the Goderich Cabinet was early in January dissolved, and the Duke of Wellington was called on by the King to form a new administration. Upon what principles did the great soldier propose that the Government should be carried on?

What policy, asked Mr. Sheil, did he intend to pursue? "Can the spirit which animates the people be subdued? Is the feeling which exists in Ireland but a spark which, with his Wellington boot, he can tread out? Let him look at the spectacle which this country presents. We are one-third of the population of the empire. We are completely organized, and stand in a solid square. We march with a steady and uniform tread; the tramp of seven millions moving together can be heard afar off. Europe listens."*

On the 19th January, the list of the new Cabinet was published. It was found to contain four of Mr. Canning's friends, namely, Lord Dudley, Mr. Huskisson, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Grant. These, with Lords Melville and Ellenborough, were favourable to the removal of religious disabilities; the other seven, says Lord Eldon, in a private letter written at the time (Peel, Aberdeen, Lyndhurst, Bathurst, Goulburn, Herries, and the Premier himself), were "as yet for Protestants, but some very loose."† In the Irish executive, no alteration took place. The com-

* Speech, 12th January, 1828.

† Letter to Lady F. Banks, 25th January, 1828. Life, vol. iii., p. 27.

position of the Government was thus brought back as nearly as possible to what it had been under Lord Liverpool, twelve months before. The subject of Catholic claims was left an open question, and while the leader of the Lords voted in one way, the leader of the Commons was allowed to vote in the other. But Mr. Huskisson was at best but a pale copy of the illustrious chief who once filled the place which he now occupied. On matters of commercial policy, he was indeed regarded as a personal guarantee for adherence to the principles of progress; but by the importunate assailants of religious exclusion he was regarded as little more than a hostage deserving of individual consideration and respect, but wholly powerless to abate the violence of the re-kindling war. There seemed to be no reason for anticipating from a ministry so constituted any measure of willing concession. What might be extorted from their reluctant sense of necessity, remained to be tried. A series of resolutions pledging the Association to oppose the return to Parliament of every supporter of the Wellington Cabinet was, after much discussion, carried at a meeting of that body on the 24th January. O'Connell argued in its favour, while Sheil opposed it as premature; we shall presently see

how their relative positions in this respect became reversed.

On the 2nd May, Mr. O'Connell moved that the resolution of the 24th January should be rescinded in consequence of the assent given by the Duke of Wellington to the repeal of the Test Act. He was supported by Mr. Barrett, Mr. Conway, and others; and opposed by Mr. Sheil, Mr. O'Gorman, and Mr. Lawless, who argued that though the original resolution might have been unwise, it would expose them to the imputation of subserviency to power, if rescinded without any recantation on the part of the Duke.

On the 8th of May, the Catholic question was once more brought forward by Sir F. Burdett, supported by Mr. Brougham, Sir J. Mackintosh, Lord F. L. Gower, and others. It was opposed by Mr. Peel, Sir C. Wetherell, and others of less note, and was carried, in a House of 538 members, by a majority of six. Though less disheartening than the result of the division in the previous year, the narrowness of this majority too plainly indicated that so long as the influence of Government continued to be neutralized or hostile, no chance existed of any measure of relief being carried.

The Cabinet of the Duke had been formed by a

coalition between the Canningites and the Tories of Lord Eldon's school, and it necessarily implied the recognition of various open questions. Of these the most important, doubtless, was Catholic Emancipation; yet it was not upon it that the coalition was destined to be broken up. Electoral Reform, which had hitherto been regarded as of little moment in a party sense, had gradually been making way amongst the middle and upper classes of society. Lord John Russell and Lord Althorp headed an increasing minority in the Commons, who demanded the suppression of the rotten boroughs, and the transfer of the representation to the rising commercial towns. Many of the Conservative Whigs, and nearly all Mr. Canning's friends, foresaw the consequences that must ensue by a prolonged resistance to all change of this description; and when, by the decision of election committees, Penrhyn and East Retford had been sentenced to disfranchisement on account of their gross corruption, it was felt that, in the re-distribution of seats thus forfeited, two at least should be given to some great manufacturing town. As leader of the Commons, Mr. Huskisson pledged himself that this should be done; the bill disfranchising Penrhyn, and allocating two seats in future to

Birmingham, passed the Lower House without difficulty, and was sent up to the Lords, where it was thrown out on the second reading. Meanwhile the bill disfranchising East Retford, and transferring its alienated seats to the circumjacent county, had passed through the first and second stage, and stood for committee on the 19th of May. The more liberal section of the Cabinet, feeling that the vote of the Lords did not exonerate the Government from its pledge, desired that the bill should be so far modified as to give the new representation to industrial wealth and population instead of to the landed interest. Being out-numbered however in the Cabinet, they agreed that all the members of the Government should vote for the bill going into committee, and that each of the clauses should be an open question. But when the order of the day was moved on the East Retford bill, Lord Sandon rose and addressed an appeal to Mr. Huskisson, so direct and irresistible, regarding the pledge before mentioned, that the ministerial leader found himself absolutely at fault as to the course which he ought to pursue. It was a curious scene; the House, roused from its torpor by the question of personal honour and good faith which had unexpectedly been raised, grew impatient and

excited; while Mr. Huskisson, puzzled by the subtleties of his own conscientiousness, and vacillating between his duty to the public and regard for the opinion of his colleagues, found it impossible to come to a decision. At length the debate closed, and the ayes were commanded to go to the right and the noes to the left.* Mr. Huskisson turned to Lord Palmerston, who sat beside him, and exclaimed, "What shall I do? It is impossible to resist the appeal which Sandon has made; yet what then becomes of our understanding of this morning?" His colleague said he thought he ought to vote for the amendment, and that, if he decided upon doing so, he for one would vote along with him. It was necessary that those who resisted the amendment should cross the floor, while the opposition came over to the Treasury side; and such was the wavering of Mr. Huskisson up to the last moment, that had he been obliged to leave his seat on the right hand of the chair, and walk across the House in order to vote in the affirmative, it is doubtful whether he would have done so. As it was, he remained with two or three others on the ministerial bench, while Mr. Peel and the rest of those who held office voted

* The manner in which the divisions in committee were at that time taken.

in the negative. On returning home he wrote to the Duke, placing his office at his disposal. Somewhat to his surprise the offer was at once accepted, and a few days afterwards Lord Dudley, Mr. Grant, Lord Palmerston, and Mr. Lamb likewise quitted the ministry. Thus ended the third coalition Cabinet which had been formed within the space of a single year. Not long afterwards, in conversation with Lord Dudley and Lord Palmerston, Mr. Huskisson made use of these prophetic words, "Now, mark, the Catholic question is carried. I know the Duke and Peel well, and now that they have cleared the Cabinet of all of us, they will set about settling the question."

Many days did not elapse before evidence seemed to be afforded of the truth of this prediction. On the 9th of June Lord Lansdowne moved a resolution in the Lords regarding the Catholic claims, similar to that which had been lately affirmed by the Commons; the debate lasted two nights, and at its close the Duke of Wellington, while resisting the motion on grounds of present expediency, not only abstained from the use of any arguments, founded on the old doctrines of sectarian or political exclusion, but significantly gave utterance to a wish that means could be

found for finally settling the question. Lord Lansdowne took care, in reply, to repeat, as clearly as possible, the expressions which had fallen from the Duke, but without hazarding any inference from them, which might possibly have had the effect of calling forth some qualification of their obvious meaning. Close observers on both sides did not fail to mark the altered tone of the Prime Minister. They believed that they had heard the first sound of the breaking up of the ice, and were not disposed to believe it the less, because it was neither possible nor desirable that incredulous and impatient millions afar off could perceive or be persuaded that the fact was so.

The Duke of Wellington's speech was the subject of many comments on both sides of the Channel. Among the partisans of ascendency its tone was viewed with distrust, while to the more sagacious among the Whigs it indicated the approach of a change. In the Association, Mr. Sheil pronounced an elaborate appeal to the great soldier, for whom it might have been reserved by fortune to perform in legislation a deed as notable as the greatest of his feats of arms; but the advice of his Grace, that they should allow political excitement to subside, he rejected as wholly inadmissible.

"Has our policy been so rash as it has been represented? Have we shown such a want of skill and prudence as has been attributed to us, and is it upon the Duke of Wellington's '*if,*' coupled with his notable '*perhaps,*' that we are to be induced to shift our course, and render inoperative and ineffectual all that we have accomplished? Are we to let down the spirit of the people?—are we to allow the energy which we have called up to subside?—are we to abandon all public assemblies, and to cease pouring forth our ardent and exciting appeals? We are not so utterly weak as to give up the results of all our labours, and to fling the power which we have gained over the national mind away. I tell the Duke of Wellington, in the name of that great community to which I belong, that we know our duty and our influence too well. 'If we cease to agitate,' forsooth!—We will not cease to agitate. . . . So far from denying that this Association (which in truth represents Ireland) governs the people, through the power of public opinion, I proclaim it. We are endowed with great authority. It is but needful that we should lift the signal, and seven millions, as if by the power of enchantment, start up at our command. If so much has been already done, is opportunity not to be afforded for effecting still more? Do they think that nothing more can be effected? Do they think that no further consolidation can take place? Do they think that our materials for excitement are exhausted, and that from this crater of the public passions, no more lava can be poured out?"*

Knowing, as we now do, the sincerity of the wish expressed by the Duke, and the almost insuperable difficulties with which he had to contend, it is clear enough that this conflict of counsel, so far from being what it then seemed to be, an obstacle in itself insurmountable, afforded really the only chance of

* Speech, 14th June, 1828.

solving the great question. As Prime Minister of George IV., addressing the House of Lords, his Grace could not, with prudence, have made use of any other language. What his instinctive good sense impelled him to say, tended at once to dishearten resistance, while it deprecated without disarming external pressure. Had he seemed to recognise, or even to tolerate, the overbearing tone of the agitation before he could reckon upon the assent of the King, or that of his own Cabinet, to concession, he must inevitably have failed; but it is equally plain that, had the Association literally taken him at his word, and agreed to a suspension of hostilities, his only weapon, that of warning, would have been broken in his hand. He did the right thing—the only thing that was possible in his position; but so did they.

The Earl of Aberdeen succeeded Lord Dudley in the Foreign Office; Sir George Murray took the place of Mr. Huskisson as Secretary for the Colonies; and Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald was appointed President of the Board of Trade in the room of Mr. Grant; Sir Henry Hardinge was made Secretary at War, in place of Lord Palmerston; and Lord Francis L. Gower became Secretary for Ireland instead of Mr. Lamb.

By these changes vacancies were created in the

representation of several places, and amongst the rest in the county of Clare. Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald had for many years been returned without opposition; and when offered the Presidency of the Board of Trade, he hardly bestowed a thought upon the contingency that his return might be opposed. He had always voted for Emancipation; was popular as a landlord and a magistrate; and, by his property and connexions, possessed what was usually deemed a paramount influence in the county. The name of his father had long been popular, in consequence of his having resigned the post of Prime Sergeant rather than vote for the Union, and the new Cabinet Minister had rendered himself an especial favourite, not only with the resident gentry of his neighbourhood, but also with the Catholic bishops and clergy. So strong were these feelings, that when it was first debated in the Association, whether it would be possible successfully to oppose his re-election, Mr. N. P. O'Gorman, and others who possessed great personal knowledge of that part of the country, declined to recommend what they considered a more than doubtful experiment; while Major Macnamara, by far the most popular candidate that could have been named for the occasion, refused to allow himself to

be put in nomination. On the other hand, Mr. Steele and the O'Gorman Mahon vehemently urged that the people might be stimulated to make the sacrifices necessary to secure success, provided only a fitting champion could be found.

Mr. Fitzgerald had been the undeviating supporter of Tory principles under Mr. Perceval and Lord Liverpool. To secure his seat for Clare, a periodical vote in favour of Emancipation was, perhaps, indispensable; but on every other question of civil and religious freedom he had been uniformly opposed to the feelings and opinions of his countrymen. He voted against the repeal of the Test Act to the last; and the very change that raised him to the Cabinet was produced by the schism on East Retford, against the transfer of whose seats to Birmingham he had recorded his vote. These considerations were vehemently urged by Mr. Sheil on the 21st of June, when the Association still hesitated whether or not his re-election should be opposed; but there were others. "They were arrived at a point when not to advance would be to fall back. Their victories in Waterford and Louth had struck men with astonishment; but it was necessary that the sensation should be repeated, and for this something yet more startling in itself

was requisite. They must show an increase of vigour. Vesey Fitzgerald must be seized with a gigantic grasp, and hurled from the House of Commons. In such a cause it was impossible to stop. On! on! should be their maxim. They could not rest where they were; seven millions must advance. What they had done would be of no avail unless they could do more. They had made great impressions; but these must not only be renewed, but deepened. They must make men exclaim—This question must be settled, else there is no limit to the consequences of such a condition of things!"*

At length it was suggested that Mr. O'Connell should offer himself as a candidate for Clare; but it was not without much hesitation that he consented to do so. He naturally feared the unfavourable effect that must follow from defeat, and he foresaw the difficulty there would be in convincing men that he was sincere in the opinion he had expressed, that there was nothing in the law to prevent him as a Catholic being elected and taking his seat as a member of the House of Commons. At length, upon receipt of certain confidential reports from the scene of the meditated contest, he issued his address to the

* Speech in the Association, 21st June, 1828.

electors of Clare: and, assisted by the whole strength of his party, proceeded to make a rapid canvass of the constituency. The rapid progress of popular ignition, under the shower of burning words, to which the astonished community of a remote district were thus subjected, is well described in an account which soon afterwards appeared from the pen of Mr. Sheil. He had done much in determining the course which had been adopted, and when it had been entered on he threw his whole heart into the struggle. A certain vague sense of incredulity overhung the minds of all up to the last moment. Would O'Connell really go to the poll? and could he legally be returned? If no barrier actually existed to his admission into Parliament, what had they been fighting for so long? No logic could explain the riddle; but enthusiasm and eloquence are more powerful than logic, and far oftener decide the course of human affairs.

At length the day so long expected dawned upon the swarming hills that rise on either side of the river Fergus; and before the shades of summer night had passed away, the hum of multitudes filled the air. From every portion of the county vast numbers had crowded on the preceding days to witness the great trial of strength between the political outlaw, who

claimed to represent the interests and feelings of the people, and the Minister who, supported by the whole aristocracy of his county, represented the Government of the King. The most perfect order and sobriety prevailed. Intoxication was nowhere to be seen. A vow of self-denial had for the first time been unanimously taken by the peasantry, and a sort of democratic police had been improvised, whose commands were implicitly obeyed. By these means the unhoused myriads who remained congregated in and around the county town for a period of many days, though wrought to a pitch of fearful excitement, assembled, remained, and departed, without the occurrence of a single accident or altercation.

At the close of the first day the numbers were found to be, for

Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald	194
Mr. O'Connell	200—6

Those who have witnessed the effect produced, upon the announcement that the numbers polled up to a particular period are virtually equal, can estimate in some sort the stimulus which this intelligence gave to the popular inflammation. Nor did the fever abate when, at the end of

the second day's struggle, the majority for Mr. O'Connell was ascertained to have slightly augmented. On Thursday evening the result of the first three days' polling .ras reported thus :—

Mr. Fitzgerald	842
Mr. O'Connell	1820
Majority	978

To the multitude this seemed conclusive, as in fact it soon was found to be. Still there were some who doubted whether a relaxation of the popular efforts and popular discipline could yet with security be allowed; and there was in the minds of others an unquenchable desire that the triumph should be rendered as complete as the resources of "tenant insurrection" rendered possible. "The battle," said Mr. Sheil, "is won, but the effect of the defeat will be measured elsewhere by the demonstration of the overwhelming numbers :—no laying down of our arms while our adversary keeps the field." Influenced by these feelings, he delivered, at the close of the third day's poll, one of the most exciting addresses to the people which had ever been uttered even by him. He alluded to the shameful rights over the persons of their humbler vassals, by feudal lords of the soil.

"The priests at length began to interfere. They said 'this custom of the country,' as it was called, 'was contrary alike to the laws of God and man;' the lords exclaimed that the priests everywhere were sowing disunion and destroying the wholesome dependence of the tenant upon his baronial master. These priests ought to be put down,—they were converting their holy ministry to the worst of purposes, and depriving the landlords of their best territorial prerogative. Peasants,—tillers of the earth,—but men, for after all you are human beings,—the landlords of Clare have as much right to your votes as they have to your wives and daughters. Give unto Cæsar what is due to Cæsar, but give unto God what is due to God. I say to you, pay to your landlords the rent which is due to them, but give what is due to your conscience and your country what is due to them. As to the landlords, I trust they will forbear from adopting a system of exasperating persecution towards the great body of the people. Every kindly and generous feeling forbids the exercise of measures of rigour, and his heart must be made of granite who can bring himself to let his vengeance fall upon the wretch who has only followed the dictates of his conscience in violating his will. But let the landlords beware—the peasants

'may have their day.' The Irish have good memories; and as there is One in heaven to whom I lift my hand and raise my eyes, if —— but I shall not proceed. Enough to say that the Irish gentry should recollect that they dwell upon a volcanic elevation. Let them beware of an eruption — let them look to it. The people must not be provoked —the landlord and tenant are made of the same flesh and blood, and will rot at last in the same churchyard. The worms (those genuine Jacobins) will scarcely make a difference between landlord and tenant, and will digest Sir Edward O'Brien and Paddy Murphy with an impartial stomach. Why do I urge these topics? In order to make landlords recollect that they are compounded out of the same materials as their serfs; they should remember that the passion of retribution (I will not call it the wild justice of revenge) is a property of human nature. If they oppress the people, sooner or later they will feel the consequences."

On Saturday evening, the sheriff declared Mr. O'Connell had been duly elected by a majority of 1075, the total numbers being, for Mr. Vesey Fitzgerald, 982, for Mr. O'Connell, 2057.

Although for some days the issue of the conflict

had been anticipated, its formal announcement elicited feelings of enthusiasm which cannot be described. To gratify the people who had made so many sacrifices to insure the result, it was resolved that the newly elected member for Clare should be conducted in triumphal procession from Ennis to the confines of the county. The popular "sympathy became contagious; and the soldiers shouted and threw up their caps for joy, upon the hills whence they surveyed the popular ovation."*

The period for which the abortive statute of 1825 had been enacted, expired in July. It had from the first lain a dead letter, no attempt having ever been made to enforce it. But the resentment with which it was regarded had not died out in men's minds; and its obsequies were celebrated amid an outburst of popular exultation. Steps were forthwith taken to restore the name and form of the old Catholic Association; and its resuscitation was inaugurated† by the renewal of the pledge to contest the return to Parliament of every man who would not declare himself an opponent of the Duke of Wellington's admi-

* Speech of Mr. Sheil on the Church of Ireland. House of Commons, 23rd July, 1835.

† 2nd August, 1828.

nistration; and in these matters, exclaimed Mr. Sheil, "agitation has proved itself to be omnipotent."

The announcement of such a determination would at any previous period have produced little sensation among the occupants of seats for counties and boroughs. But the example of Clare had filled many with misgivings, who had laughed at the power of popular combination until now. The fear of losing personal importance by the loss of seats that had frequently been won at ruinous expense, brought men to think of toleration who had never thought of it before.* The political nerves of the most resolute began to give way.

"In no page of history will there be discovered such an example of consolidated passion, and concentrated energy, and of systematised action, as is at this moment presented to the contemplation of every political observer by the actual state of Ireland. In other countries, large masses of the population may be found, who, under the pressure of penalty and disqualification, have been brought into adherence, and felt a community of interest in a community of wrong. The Huguenots of France, for example, were a powerful body, but still they did not exhibit a union so perfect and complete as the great seven millions of disfranchised subjects, who, shut out from the pale of the constitution, are drawn up beyond it. . . . An adversary who

* Annual Register, vol. lxx., p. 130.

reads the words which I now speak, may exclaim, 'This, at all events, is candid;' so it is, and in frankness there is much wisdom. For wherefore should we disguise that the priesthood of Ireland have enlisted themselves in the cause of the country, and bear its standard? Let Protestants rail at this infusion of politics into religion, or religion into politics, as they will. The fact may be deplorable, but it is not the less awful; and statesmen should not expend their time (and moments in this crisis have become of value) in declaiming against the influence of the priesthood, but in considering the magnitude of that most important and momentous fact. The clergy were first swept away by the popular passions, and afterwards became their guides. The priests (and they are citizens as well as priests) were pressed into the ranks, and then became the leaders of the people. When a priest complies with the popular will, he may direct and control it: but if he opposes it, his power is gone. Of this truth we had instances in the county of Clare. One or two of the Catholic clergy, friends and relatives of Mr. Fitzgerald, exhibited apathy in the national cause, and became the objects of execration and of contempt. It would be easy to drive them from their altars. But whatever may be the origin of the profound sympathy which is experienced and manifested by the priesthood of Ireland, the fact itself is beyond all question, and with the fact alone, and not with the religionism of the matter (if I may coin a phrase), I have to do. I speak of the fact as a leading feature in this strange condition of things. Let Government look to it. The Irish people are not only organized, but that organization in all its details is minutely perfect. Every parish in Ireland has a captain at its head . . . Where is all this to end?"*

In the course of the autumn, serious apprehensions were felt by the Government as to the consequences

* Speech in Catholic Association, 12th July, 1828.

which might ensue from the marchings of the peasantry in vast multitudes, and in disciplined array. Sometimes they bore green boughs, sometimes wands with small pieces of riband attached to them; on no occasion arms. But their imposing numbers, and their perfect sobriety and precision in obeying the commands of their local leaders, rendered such demonstrations justly formidable. The humane and gallant spirit of the Viceroy was troubled with the fearful results which it was easy to foresee must ensue, if by any rash act or word these excitable though still orderly masses should be brought into collision either with the political party to whom they were opposed, or with the local authorities. His few months' experience of Irish administration had sufficed to work a rapid change in his personal opinions on the great question which then occupied every mind in the community. The conviction was fast growing up within him, that peace or safety for Ireland there could be none until that question was definitively settled; and he knew that no circumstance could occasion so disastrous a delay as an outbreak on the part of the unreflecting peasantry, contagious as such an ebullition, however casually arising, was certain to be. Something of these generous fears were in private

expressed to Lord Cloncurry, who at once offered to communicate with the chiefs of the popular party. Mr. O'Connell was then absent from Dublin, but his Lordship, accompanied by Mr. W. H. Curran, sought an interview with Mr. Sheil at his house in Leinster Street.* The danger of suffering these *attroupements* to proceed was fully discussed; and the expediency of endeavouring to prevent their repetition was entirely assented to by Mr. Sheil, who undertook, that as far as it depended on his exertions, a stop should be put to the processions in question. This interview took place about the middle of August, and on the 30th of that month, in a speech of singular power and dignity of conception, he advised the Association to warn the people of the perilous condition of things around them. He thus depicted the imminent danger in which society was placed:—

"On the one hand, the Catholics had attained the perfection of national organization and popular discipline. They had almost reached the excellence of military array. But an immense population thus united, thus affiliated, thus controlled, in such a state

* In the account given of this transaction by Lord Cloncurry, in his Personal Recollections, p. 95, there are several inaccuracies of detail. His visit to the Association, in point of fact, occurred some weeks later, when he proceeded there alone, but on the occasion of the interview above-mentioned with Mr. Sheil, Mr. O'Connell was at Derynane.

of complete subordination, afforded matter of the most solemn meditation. A feeling of expectation had begun to manifest itself among the people. They put painful questions and awful interrogations. But if the state of the Catholics were deserving of attention, that of the Protestants called likewise for remark. It was in vain to hide it from themselves. The Protestants were every day becoming more alienated by their display of power. The great proprietors, and all men who had an interest in the security of the State, were anxious for the settlement of the question; but still their pride was wounded, and they saw with some disrelish the attitude of just equality which the Catholics had assumed . . . It was clear that the division between Catholic and Protestant was widening. They were before parted, but they were now rent asunder; and while the Catholic Association rose up from the indignant passions of one great body of the community, the 'Brunswick Club' was springing out of the irritated pride and the sectarian rancour of another. The Association owed its political parentage to heavy wrongs operating on deeply-sensitive and strongly-susceptible feelings. Oppression had engendered it. The Brunswick Club had its birth in the hereditary love of power and inveterate habits of domination; and thus two great rivals were brought into political existence and entered the lists against each other. As yet they had not engaged in the great struggle—they had not closed in the combat; but as they advanced and collected their might, it was easy to discern the terrible passions by which they were influenced, and the full determination with which they rushed to the encounter. Meanwhile the Government stood by, and the minister folded his arms as if he were a mere indifferent observer, and the terrific contest only afforded him a spectacle for the amusement of his official leisure. He sat as if two gladiators were crossing their swords for his recreation. The Cabinet seemed to be little better than a box in an amphitheatre from whence his Majesty's ministers surveyed the business of blood. This, then, was the state of things: there were three parties concerned

Catholics, Protestants, and the Government. The Catholics advanced upon one hand, and the Protestants upon the other, and the Government, by whom both ought to be controlled, looked passively on."*

During the same week, at the provincial meeting of Munster, he had held forth the promise of a speedy realization of the popular hope :—

"What had the Government to apprehend from their resentment in peace? An answer to that question was supplied by what they actually beheld. Was not the country agitated by the most dreadful passions? Had not all the natural bonds by which men were tied together been burst asunder? Were not all the relations of society which exist elsewhere gone? Had not property lost its influence? Had not rank been stripped of the respect which should belong to it, and had not an internal government grown up which, gradually superseding the legitimate authorities, had armed itself with a complete domination? Did Waterford, and Louth, and Clare supply no reminiscences, or afford no warnings? Was it nothing that the whole body of the Catholic clergy were alienated from the State, and that the Catholic gentry, and peasantry, and priesthood, were all combined in one vast confederacy? So much for Catholic indignation, while they were at peace. And when England should be involved in war—he paused—it was not necessary that he should discuss that branch of the division, or point to the cloud which, charged with thunder, was hanging over their heads. One act of legislative wisdom could break and disperse it. We have treated the question as one of mere expediency, and put the great Captain to his election. One of the two parties was to be offended, according to his view. Let him conciliate both if he could, if he

* Speech in Association, 30th August, 1828.

could not, which was it wisest to please? Let him choose; let him elect between a nation and a faction; between thousands and millions; between a powerless aristocracy and an almost irresistible people. Events had become their advocates. The Russian trumpet was pealing in their favour; a voice was heard from Constantinople which cried, 'Set Ireland free!' and inscribed on the white flag that streamed on the navies of France, as, laden with gallant men, they were wafted to the Morea, it was easy to discern through the telescope of the mind, 'Emancipation.'"

Again, upon the 18th September, he recurred to the imminent peril that existed of civil conflict between the Orange yeomanry of Ulster, who still shouldered the arms of 1798, and preserved amongst them the traditional maxims of discipline and organization that had so long given them a power far exceeding their proportionate numbers,—and the Catholic "population whose masses had been reduced to an almost military uniformity of movement:" and whom it was impossible to observe without feeling that there had come to be "a dreadful unity among the people."* The sense of public danger still continuing, on the 25th September, he reiterated the same anxious admonitions:—

"I am well aware that I have been considered as an alarmist, because, upon a late occasion I raised my voice in order to admonish the community to which I belong, and as far as I was able, in order to warn the Government of the probable results of

* Speech in Association, 18th September, 1828.

the state of things to which the refusal of Emancipation was hurrying the country. I have been represented as a terrorist, and it was said that being myself affrighted, I was anxious to convert my fears into a panic. That sort of valour which consists in setting a small value on the lives of others, is easy of attainment, and I own that I am not ambitious of that kind of political chivalry. I do not, I hope, often speak of myself, but I am justified in the egotism of a moment, when I say, that where my own liberty was at stake, when I was brought to the threshold of a long captivity and saw a dungeon before me, I did not exhibit any pusillanimous disposition. My fears are not derived from any danger of my own, but I confess that if courage consists in seeing with indifference my country covered with the blood of its people, I do not possess that kind of intrepidity. It does appear to me that men are not sufficiently aware of the results which may ensue from the unparalleled excitation (for it is without example) to which the passions of both Catholics and Protestants have been raised. It is recorded that, in a great combat, so fierce was the fury of the contending armies, that they were not conscious of an earthquake by which the field of battle was shaken. In this terrific contest—in this shock of faction, we do not perceive that the country is rocking beneath our feet. Listen to the mutterings of the earthquake, and let not the subterranean thunder roll unheard. I do here repeat, what I before declared, that the Government (for with them all the blame must ultimately rest), by allowing the Catholic question to convulse the country, and not at once interposing for its adjustment,—by their strange procrastination, and almost imbecile indecision—by their fantastical irresolution and unaccountable infirmity of purpose, have caused the mind of Ireland to be infuriated to such a point, that we are almost at the mercy of accident, and that any unfortunate contingency might throw the country into a convulsion. The oldest man who hears me does not remember a parallel of national passion. . . . I am at a loss to see any benefit to be derived from these meetings and marchings

to which so much anxious attention has lately been directed, beyond the bare evidence which they afford of the colossal power of the people, which bestrides the land; and of that amazing strength, perhaps, there has been given proof enough. I had rather show the Government the giant in repose, than exhibit this mighty stirring of his limbs. It is excellent to have a 'giant strength,' but it is rash to use it after this gigantic fashion. The people are reconciled. The Government must see pretty clearly what they could do, at a signal (God forbid that it ever should be given!)—enough has been done—and I own that I see many objections to these assemblies. First, they are not of our calling. We may have prepared the public mind, and rendered it susceptible of the feelings from which these meetings derive their origin, but we have not called them. I do not desire to see any assemblies of Roman Catholics, excepting such as shall be under the immediate direction and control of that government which we have established. We have hitherto exercised a useful despotism over the passions of the people, and have taken care to present to them none but legal and constitutional objects of political pursuit. But let us have a care. Let no spirits be permitted to rise, except such as we shall evoke. Let us be wise in our magic, that no power shall ascend except at our bidding; and let us beware lest some spirit may appear who shall disobey the spell—who may trespass on the boundaries which we have traced—who shall pass the circle and hurry the enchanters away. . . . Let us show the Marquis of Anglesea that Ireland may be governed upon different principles, and let us show him what a wise Government could be, by performing the part of a wise government ourselves. Let us, by gentle remonstrance, disperse these assemblies, and prove with what facility Irishmen can be controlled."*

Resolutions were subsequently, passed dissuading

* Speech in Catholic Association, 25th September, 1828.

the people from holding such assemblages, and Mr. O'Connell was asked "to employ his powerful and deserved authority" to the same end; and this he did by the publication of an address to the men of Tipperary, enjoining the strict observance of order and tranquillity, and the discontinuance of demonstrations calculated to cause exasperation and alarm.* The address was received in various districts at the moment when thousands were marching to a common place of rendezvous; they instantly obeyed the admonition, and returned to their homes. A proclamation by the Lord Lieutenant in Council was issued on the 1st October, forbidding such assemblages; none took place; and the authority of the King and that of the Association claimed alike the merit of their suppression.

* The resolutions of the Association were adopted on the 25th, and Mr. O'Connell's address was dated the 30th, September, 1828.

CHAPTER XIII.

1828—1829.

Beginning of the end—Penenden Heath—Dinner at the London Tavern—Lord Cloncurry—The Premier and the Catholic Primate—Recal of Lord Anglesea—What was to be done?—Sir Robert Peel's reasons for concession—A midnight visit to Strathfieldsaye—Suppression of the Association—Dinner at Mr. Sheil's—The Relief Bill carried—Disfranchisement of the forty-shilling freeholders.

As symptoms of wavering betrayed themselves in quarters hitherto inaccessible alike to the influences of persuasion or fear,* popular feeling throughout England became aroused, and at public meetings and in the public prints, language the most unqualified, and

* In the latter part of 1828, Sir Robert Heron says, "the Duke of Wellington has shown some disposition to settle the Catholic question, which, indeed, he must be mad to oppose any longer. No one knows his intentions; yet he alone amongst the intolerants gives hope."—p. 174.

frequently the most unscrupulous, was held. Clergymen and lawyers vied with one another in the vehemence and variety of their denunciations of all concession; the warnings of history were reiterated; and, by anticipation, the contents of the prophetic vials were poured forth. Persons of quality no longer disdained to mingle their voices in the general clamour; and it can hardly be doubted that, had a dissolution of Parliament occurred in 1828, a decided majority would have been returned in Great Britain upon the "No Popery" cry. The Whigs were divided; and the energy of radicalism was still undirected to any very definite or practical purpose. The unpopularity of the King was almost forgotten in the seclusion of Windsor; and the authority of a Government presided over by the Duke of Wellington was incontestably greater than that which any previous administration had possessed for many years. In the midst of this apparent strength and security the partisans of ascendency were, nevertheless, filled with misgivings. "The ambiguity of the Duke's speech (on Lord Lansdowne's motion, 9th of June) made the world uneasy."* Rumours, officially discredited, yet still not wholly disbelieved, began to circulate regard-

* Letter of Lord Eldon, July 19th, 1828. Life, vol. iii., p. 55.

ing a change of opinion in the mind of the Irish Viceroy. We now know that these reports were not without foundation, although it was not until the close of the year that circumstances occurred which no longer left any doubt of their accuracy. Other indications, meanwhile, of irresolution on the part of Ministers* contributed to fire the zeal of those who still continued true to the principles of Perceval and Eldon. Public demonstrations in different parts of the kingdom were resolved on; if the Duke and Mr. Peel were really disposed to remain firm, their hands would be thereby strengthened; if a weak unwillingness to incur the responsibility of civil strife had begun to dim the eye of their party faith, the shout of assembled multitudes, headed by the nobles and the clergy of the realm, would recal the waverers to a sense of their duty, and "the constitution might yet be saved."

A meeting of the landed proprietors, clergy, and freeholders of the county of Kent was summoned for the 24th of October, to petition against Catholic Emancipation. The meeting was appointed to take place on Penenden Heath, and from the rank and in-

* Letters of Lord Eldon during 1828. Life. Vol. iii., pp. 33, 38, 54, 58.

fluence of its chief promoters, and the independent spirit traditionally ascribed to the yeomanry of that portion of the kingdom, more than ordinary importance was attached to the assemblage. Mr. Sheil conceived the bold idea of presenting himself in the midst of its proceedings, and remonstrating on his own behalf and that of his fellow worshippers against the meditated sentence of exclusion. The resolution once formed, he determined on not allowing his intention to be known, Mr. Woulffe, Mr. W. H. Curran, and one or two other intimate friends, being alone made aware of the design. A communication was made to a person resident in London, through whom a small freehold in Kent was purchased in his name, in order that no technical objection might be interposed in the way of his taking part in the business of the meeting; and a few days previous to that which had been appointed for the meeting he set out upon his singular and, for him, memorable mission.

On arriving at the place appointed, a message was conveyed to him from Lord Darnley by Mr. Shee,* requesting that he would not attempt to speak, lest it should be looked upon as an intrusion, and injure the cause which he designed to serve. He was not, how-

* The present Sergeant Shee, M.P.

ever, to be turned from his purpose by sage advice of this description; and after Lord Winchilsea and Mr. Plumtree on the one side, and Lords Camden, Darnley, and Teynham, on the other, had spoken, he presented himself, and essayed to obtain a hearing; but the interruptions with which he was incessantly assailed rendered it impossible for any, except those who happened to stand near him, to catch more than a few consecutive words of his address. Though little accustomed to such a mode of reception, he persisted in delivering, almost verbatim, what he had prepared to say; and an accurate copy having been furnished by him to one of the evening papers, the audience whom he really desired to reach throughout every part of the kingdom, became in a few hours acquainted with what the men of Kent had refused to listen to. His selection of topics was at once courageous and discreet. If any useful effect was to be produced, the prejudices that had become intensely national must, he felt, be shaken; yet they must be shaken without offence to the national pride, and, if possible, removed without inflicting moral pain. Remonstrance against past and present injustice would have inevitably assumed too much of the tone of accusation; and though rebuke may be

endured from the minister of religion or the statesman, a popular audience is seldom docile or teachable by such admonition; and from a stranger, if not an intruder, it could have only served to exasperate and inflame hostility.

"Let no man believe that I have come here in order that I might enter the lists of religious controversy, and engage with any of you in a scholastic disputation. In the year 1828, the real presence does not afford any appropriate subject for debate, and it is not by the shades of a mystery that the rights of a British citizen ought to be determined. I do not know whether there are many here by whom I am regarded as an idolator because I conscientiously adhere to the faith of your forefathers, and profess the doctrine in which I was born and bred; but if I am so accounted by you, you ought not to inflict a civil deprivation upon the accident of the cradle. You ought not to punish me for that for which I am not in reality to blame. If you do, you will make the misfortune of the Catholic the fault of the Protestant, and by inflicting a wrong upon my religion cast a discredit upon your own. I am not the worse subject of my king and the worse citizen of my country because I concur in the belief of the great majority of the Christian world."

Avoiding for the most part any expression that could wound or affront the popular self-love, he addressed himself to its susceptibilities, and endeavoured to link the claims of his class with the most venerable and august associations:—

"Of the charges against the religion of Ireland, the annals of England afford the confutation. The body of your common law was

given by the Catholic Alfred. He gave you your judges, your magistrates, your high sheriffs (you, sir, hold your office, and have called this great assembly, by virtue of his institutions), your courts of justice, your elective system, and the great bulwark of your liberties, the trial by jury. When Englishmen peruse the chronicles of their glory, their hearts beat high with exultation, their emotions are profoundly stirred, and their souls are ardently expanded. Where is the English boy who reads the story of his great island, whose pulse does not beat at the name of Runnemede, and whose nature is not deeply thrilled at the contemplation of that great incident, when the mitred Langton, with his uplifted crosier, confronted the tyrant whose sceptre shook in his trembling hand, and extorted what you have so justly called the Great, and what I trust in God you will have cause to designate as your everlasting Charter? It was by a Catholic pontiff that the foundation-stone in the temple of liberty was laid; and it was at the altars of that religion which you are accustomed to consider as the handmaid of oppression, that the architects of the constitution knelt down. Who conferred upon the people the right of self-taxation, and fixed, if he did not create, the representation of the people? The Catholic Edward the First; while in the reign of Edward the Third, perfection was given to the representative system, parliaments were annually called, and the statute against constructive treason was enacted. . . . False, I repeat it, with all the vehemence of indignant asseveration, utterly false, is the charge habitually preferred against the religion which Englishmen have laden with penalties, and have marked with degradation. I can bear with any other charge but this—to any other charge I can listen with endurance: tell me that I prostrate myself before a sculptured marble; tell me that to a canvas glowing with the imagery of Heaven I bend my knee; tell me that my faith is my perdition; and as you traverse the churchyards in which your forefathers are buried, pronounce upon those who have lain there for many hundred years a fearful and appalling sentence; yes, call what I regard as the

truth, not only an error, but a sin to which mercy shall not be extended; all this I will bear, to all this I will submit—nay, at all this I will but smile—but do not tell me that I am in heart and creed a slave: that my countrymen cannot brook. . . . I have heard it said that the Catholic religion was a persecuting religion. It was; and so was every other religion that was ever invested with authority. How easily I could retort on you the charge of persecution—remind you that the early reformers, who set up a claim to liberty of conscience for themselves, did not indulge others in a similar luxury—tell you that Calvin, having obtained a theological masterdom in Geneva, offered up the screams of Servetus to the God of mercy and of love; that even your own Cranmer, who was himself a martyr, had first inflicted what he afterwards suffered, and that this father of your Church, whose hand was indeed a guilty one, had, even in the reign of Edward the Sixth, accelerated the progress of heretics to immortality, and sent them through fire to heaven. . . . What is Ireland as you have made her? The great mass of her population are alienated and dissociated from the State—the influence of the constituted and legitimate authorities is gone; a strange, anomalous, and unexampled kind of government has sprung up, and exercises a despotic sway; while the class inferior in numbers, but accustomed to authority, and infuriated at its loss, are thrown into formidable reaction—the most ferocious passions rage from one extremity of the country to the other. . . . Is this state of things to be permitted to continue? It is only requisite to present the question in order that all men should answer—something must be done. What is to be done? Are you to re-enact the Penal Code? It is easy for some visionary in oppression to imagine these things. . . . You shrink from the extirpation of a whole people,—even suppose that, with an impunity as ignominious as it would be sanguinary, that horrible crime could be effected. Then you must needs ask, what is to be done? In answering that question you will not dismiss from your recollection that the greatest statesmen who have for the

last fifty years directed your councils, and conducted the business of this mighty empire, concurred in the opinion, that, without a concession of the Catholic claims, nothing could be done for Ireland. . . . Burke, the foe to revolution—Fox, the asserter of popular right—Pitt, the prop of the prerogative, concurred. With reference to this great question, their minds met in a deep confluence. See to what a conclusion you must arrive when you denounce the advocates of Emancipation. Your anathema will take in one-half of Westminster Abbey; and is not the very dust into which the tongues and hearts of Pitt, and Burke, and Fox have mouldered, better than the living hearts and tongues of those who have survived them? If you were to try the question by the authorities of the dead, and by those voices which may be said to issue from the grave, how would you decide? If, instead of counting votes in St. Stephen's, you were to count the tombs in the mausoleum beside it, how would the division of the great departed stand? There would be a majority of sepulchres inscribed with immortal names upon our side."

On his return to town in the evening he called on Mr. C. Redding, to whom he recounted, with much animation and pleasantry, the incidents of the day. He seemed to be neither fatigued nor chagrined by the reception he had met with; and, after dinner, agreed to commit to writing, in the form of a narrative, his recollections and impressions of the scene in which he had taken part. His friend desired to have the paper in time for insertion as an article in the forthcoming number of the New Monthly Magazine, with which he was then editorially connected. He set about his task forthwith, and finished it with-

out laying down his pen. It forms one of the most amusing chapters in the cotemporary history of the period. The personal sketches of the chief performers are life-like and truthful; and regarding himself not a word is said that could lead the most suspicious to guess who was the author.*

On the 3rd November, a public dinner was given to Mr. Sheil, at the London Tavern; Mr. William Smith, M.P. for Norwich, presided. Four hundred persons joined in the compliment. Among others were Thomas Campbell and Mr. W. J. Fox, the present member for Oldham, who repudiated, in terms of great earnestness, the idea that the Dissenters regarded their own emancipation as a bribe to sever them in sympathy from those who had so long been their fellow-exiles from the home of the constitution. He observed that "this was a meeting for the dissemination of the principles of religious liberty, and he would say that one of the first of those principles was, that no man should be harmed in his person, his property, or his prospects, because of his belief in a long creed, or a short creed, or in no creed at all. This was one of his, and he felt convinced of their

* Recollections of the late Right Hon. R. L. Sheil, by Mr. Cyrus Redding. New Monthly Magazine, July, 1851.

great principles. Like the Hon. Chairman, he avowed himself a Dissenter, and this was a dissenting principle. Like him, he avowed himself a Protestant, and this was a Protestant principle; like him, he avowed himself a Christian, and this was a principle of Christianity; and like him, he was a man, and this principle involved the great rights of humanity."

In a letter of apology for not attending the dinner, Mr. Bentham expressed his unbounded admiration of the speech at Penenden Heath,—"So masterly an union of logic and rhetoric as Mr. Sheil's speech, scarcely have I ever beheld."

In his speech at the dinner he defended, with his accustomed boldness, what had been censured as the unseemly violence of the language used in the Association; and referred to the remarkable words of Lord Grenville, as quoted by Mr. Burke, "that the humble tone of the Catholics showed that they had no real grievance to complain of." He traced the history of gradual and grudging concession, and appealed with irresistible force to the truth of the unhappy maxim, that nothing was to be expected in seasons of quiet and forbearance. "With such wrongs, and while our hearts are bursting in our bosoms at their endurance,

you expect that we should speak in soft and mellifluous phrases; and that, instead of heaving on the rack on which she is stretched, Ireland should breathe her complaints in gentle murmurings, and that her petitions should be as soft as her national music, to which every spinster in your drawing-rooms lends the enchantment of her dulcet intonations. No, sir; the groans of a people are not to be turned into a set of parliamentary melodies."

On his return from England he was received with warm congratulations and plaudits. It was proposed that a public dinner should be given to him in Dublin, in acknowledgment of the services he had lately rendered. He declined the compliment, however, upon the ground that as a similar demonstration had been spoken of for the purpose of entertaining Lord Morpeth, and as no opportunity ought to be lost of drawing closer together the Catholic claimants of freedom and their Protestant advocates, it would serve a better and a wiser purpose if the latter suggestion should at once be carried into effect. This was accordingly agreed to, and on the 27th November, Lord Morpeth was entertained in Dublin by a large number of noblemen and gentlemen, the Duke of Leinster presiding.

In the previous October, the Marquis of Anglesea had accepted an invitation to pass some days at Lyons, the seat of Lord Cloncurry, in Kildare. Sir Anthony Hart, then Lord Chancellor, was also of the party, rendered memorable in the correspondence which subsequently took place between the Prime Minister and the Viceroy. Lord Cloncurry having soon afterwards attended one of the public meetings of the Catholic Association, the Duke of Wellington thought it right thus to advert to that proceeding:—"I will not conceal from you likewise that your visit, and those of my Lord Chancellor, to Lord Cloncurry, and the attendance of Lord Cloncurry at the Roman Catholic Association immediately subsequent to the period at which he had the honour of receiving the King's representative in his house, are not circumstances calculated to give satisfaction to the King and to the public in general."*

Lord Anglesea replied with becoming spirit, that he must be allowed to use his own discretion in the interchange of courtesies and the choice of acquaintances with whom he saw fit to associate; but denied at the

* Letter of the Duke of Wellington to the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, 11th November, 1828.

same time that he was in any way responsible for the public actions of those who, like the nobleman in question, honestly and legally entertained sentiments favourable to Catholic Emancipation. This was not deemed satisfactory, and the rebuke already so unpalatably administered, was repeated in terms not less direct. The Marquis replied that he believed Lord Cloncurry to be a loyal subject and an exemplary magistrate, and added with much feeling, "that even had he been mistaken in the character of Lord Cloncurry, and that he was not what he supposed him to be, he was sure he would not be thought arrogant in expressing a conviction that there was something in his own character and in his well-known devoted and affectionate attachment to the King, which ought to shield him from the imputation of having selected and encouraged as acquaintances those who were ill-affected to his Majesty's person and Government."* Some weeks later Lord Anglesea was recalled.

Events were now fast hastening to a crisis. On the 4th December, the Catholic Primate addressed an earnest but respectful appeal to the Duke of Wellington on the perilous state of Ireland. Doctor

* Letter to the Duke of Wellington, 23rd November, 1828.

Curtis had been personally well known to the Duke in Spain, and had subsequently received marks of his esteem. His nomination to the Catholic Archbishopric of Armagh was, in point of fact, generally understood to be attributable to his grace: Pius VII., desirous of showing his grateful respect for the British Government, having unofficially intimated his willingness to receive such a suggestion. He seldom interfered in politics; but feeling deeply the fearful exigency which had arisen, he laid aside his ordinary reserve, and anxiously besought the Premier to re-consider the policy hitherto pursued. On the 11th, his Grace replied in a communication whose brevity and ambiguity did not prevent its obtaining a memorable celebrity, and from exercising a notable influence over the transactions that were soon to follow. He declared himself "sincerely anxious to witness the settlement of the Roman Catholic question, which, by benefiting the State, would confer a benefit on every individual belonging to it. But he confessed that he saw no prospect of such a settlement." The strange suggestion then follows, that were it possible to "bury it in oblivion for a short time, and employ that time

diligently in the consideration of its difficulties on all sides (for they were very great), he should not despair of seeing a satisfactory remedy." The Duke's letter and his reply were transmitted by the Archbishop to Lord Anglesea, who frankly told him in return that he had not previously known "the precise sentiments of the Duke of Wellington upon the present state of the Catholic question." He stated his conviction "that the final and cordial settlement of that great question could alone give peace, harmony, and prosperity to *all* classes of his Majesty's subjects, and his disappointment on learning that there was no prospect of its being effected during the ensuing session of Parliament." He expressed his satisfaction at observing that the Duke "was not wholly adverse to the measure;" and advised the Catholics to abstain from violence, to avoid personalities, and by all means to propitiate his Grace, who, "of all men, would have the greatest facility in carrying it into effect." When this correspondence was read in the Association, the excitement it occasioned can hardly be described.

What was to be done? The Government of Ireland was rapidly passing from the hands of the King's

ministers into those of the chiefs of the Association. Every expedient of repression on the one side, and of agitation on the other, consistent with the maintenance of the constitution, had been exhausted. Resistance to all the claims of right and justice had to the last been vigorously sustained according to law, yet it had failed to crush or even to check the reclamations which millions uttered in a tone of unmistakable menace, but yet in accents which the law allowed. It grew plain to all that this was a state of things which could not last; yet, what was to be done? The Marquis of Anglesea, who had always voted against the Catholic claims, had but twelve months before been deliberately selected as the successor of Lord Wellesley, who had always supported those claims in the vice-royalty of Ireland. The daring and inexorable soldier had been chosen to take the place of the diplomatic and conciliatory statesman. He had been sent to Ireland to extinguish agitation, and "the extinguisher himself had taken fire." Lord Anglesea had then been recalled, and the Duke of Northumberland nominally placed in his room; nobody imagined that his Grace was likely to exercise any personal influence over the course of affairs. There

still were those indeed amongst the higher classes on both sides of the Channel who, rather than give way, would have supported Government in suspending all legal liberty, and resorting to military force in order to put down the agitation. It can hardly be doubted that in the mind of the King the contemplation of such an alternative did not excite any insuperable repugnance. But in that of his principal ministers the matter wore a different aspect. As far as Parliament was concerned, they might still have successfully resisted all concession. The majority by which the question had been carried in the House of Commons during the past session, was smaller than that by which Mr. Plunkett's Bill had been carried in 1821, Mr. Canning's in 1822, and Sir Francis Burdett's in 1825: while the majority in the House of Lords was nearly the same as that by which the measure had been rejected on the last of these occasions. But on the other hand, it was impossible to forget, that in four out of the last five Parliaments, the House of Commons had affirmed the principle of Emancipation; while every administration that had held office during the same period had been compelled to incur all the weakness and embarrassment of division, by

making it an open question.* In the majority of the existing House of Commons who had recorded their votes in favour of concession, there was a marked preponderance of the members for great towns in England, while of the representatives of counties and large towns in Ireland, the disparity was that of sixty-two votes to thirty-two.†

It was further daily becoming more obvious, that in the division of opinion which prevailed throughout the country, the rising talent and energy of the educated classes were decidedly in favour of a change, while the ranks of resistance consisted in great part of those who had survived a system of policy of which the most essential portions had already crumbled away. The mere list of names marshalled on opposite sides in the great controversy, both in and out of Parliament, offered the most serious grounds for consideration to all who desired that, in the defence of national institutions, should be enlisted the best intellects and abilities of the community.‡

* Speech of Mr. Peel on introducing the Relief Bill, 5th March, 1829.

† Idem.

‡ This argument was forcibly relied on afterwards by the Bishop of Oxford and Mr. Peel. Debate on the second reading of Relief Bill in Lords, 2nd April, and debate in Commons, 5th March.

Ministers felt that if once they entered on the path of statuteable repression, they could not stop half way. To put down political societies would be vain unless they were prepared to prevent all political assemblies likewise; and to execute a law aimed against these it would be obviously indispensable to suspend trial by jury. In a word, they must proceed to outlawry against the bulk of the Irish nation. "Assuming for a moment that a nonconceding Cabinet should not only attempt, but should succeed in carrying into effect this system of coercion, how long would it last? It might endure during peace; but would a Government be competent to uphold it in time of war? If not, the commencement of war would be the worst period in the history of the empire."* Fourteen years of uninterrupted peace were not sufficient to obliterate the recollections of a time when both France and America were combined in deadly hostility against us; and every year was certain to bring augmented strength to both, and to diminish the obstacles which the elements had formerly interposed in the ocean path of invasion. Should we ever be at war again with these jealous and powerful neighbours, it was

* Speech of Mr. Peel on introducing the Relief Bill, 5th March, 1829.

the opinion of Lord Anglesea that 70,000 men would hardly suffice for the defence of Ireland, alienated and disaffected as the great majority of her inhabitants then were.*

In the speech from the Throne, 5th February, 1829, both Houses were recommended to take into "deliberate consideration the whole condition of Ireland," with a view to the strengthening of the Executive for the repression of an Association whose continued existence was "dangerous to the public peace, and inconsistent with the spirit of the constitution;" and at the same time "to review the laws which impose civil disabilities on his Majesty's Roman Catholic subjects." In accordance with the first of these recommendations, a bill was introduced by the Home Secretary for the summary suppression of political societies, under whatever name they might exist, in Ireland, whenever their proceedings should appear to the Lord-Lieutenant inconsistent with the safety or tranquillity of that part of the United Kingdom. No resistance was offered to the measure, which was limited in its duration to a period of twelve months. The leaders of the Opposition declared that they would never have consented to an enactment so arbitrary, but that it

* Speech of Lord Anglesea, on second reading, &c.

was proposed as the temporary price of the permanent good which they had so long desired to obtain for their Catholic fellow-subjects. Mr. Huskisson and other friends of the late Mr. Canning emphatically reiterated this sentiment, and declared that they would never sanction any statute more coercive than that of 1825, without the assurance that the evils which had called the Association into existence were about to be put an end to by law.

Amongst the friends of Emancipation in England who had opportunities of knowing the difficulties which the Duke of Wellington had to encounter in persuading George IV. of its necessity, many entertained not unreasonable fears least some ebullition of feeling in Ireland, whether in the language of threat or triumph, might afford his Majesty a pretext for revoking the resolution to which he had so unwillingly come. Lord Anglesea wrote strongly to Mr. A. R. Blake, conjuring him to use whatever influence he possessed to dissuade his countrymen from holding public meetings, or in any other way hazarding the safety of their cause at so critical a juncture. "If he had a friend amongst the members of the Association, he would implore him to use his utmost efforts to induce that body to suspend its sittings." Mr. O'Connell was at

the time in London, but the letter was shown to Mr. Sheil, who, while he saw the importance of the course it recommended, felt all the difficulty that beset the attempt to procure its adoption. Recollections of 1825 and 1827 were still too fresh and vivid in his own mind; and they were not likely to be less forcibly present to the minds of others. Dr. Doyle, who happened to be then in Dublin, was consulted, and Mr. William Murphy, one of the most sagacious and influential persons of the mercantile class to which he belonged. Both concurred in the expediency of following the advice thus offered; but both understood the dangers to popular confidence and unity that would infallibly be incurred by its enunciation. O'Connell was written to, and urgently pressed to give his assent, but this he was obviously unwilling to do. Meanwhile the misgivings of the more cautious hourly increased. "Suppose," said Mr. Sheil, at last, "I were to give a cabinet dinner—divided cabinets are the order of the day—none others, indeed, can now be considered constitutional; I would form it with the most approved impartiality as to principle—quite fair, half for going right and half for going wrong: we could then discuss in safety the whole business. I have some good Burgundy, and at all

events, by the time we have got to the bottom of the bottles, we shall have got to the bottom of one another's thoughts." The idea was highly approved of, and invitations were forthwith sent to six of the more moderate section, and to an equal number of what Mr. Carlyle calls "unlimited patriots."

At the appointed hour Mr. Blake arrived, with the letter of the Marquis in his pocket. A few minutes after came Mr. William Ford, who was supposed to take the opposite view. They found themselves for some minutes alone, and Mr. Blake thought he would secure a convert to his opinion by permitting his hitherto inexorable friend to read the epistle of the ex-Viceroy with his own eyes. How far this piece of diplomatic condescension was appreciated we shall presently see. That it was meant to be overpowering admits of little doubt. Its perusal, meanwhile, had been hardly finished ere other guests arrived; and without comment the letter was returned to its owner, and replaced in his "private and confidential" pocket. The whole of the improvised cabinet had assembled with the exception of Mr. Lawless, whose want of punctuality created no surprise. Somewhat more than the usual licence, however, was exhausted, and the hero of Bally Bay did not appear. Had any

of those who grew impatient for his coming been aware that he was at that moment separated from them only by the party-wall of the house where they were assembled, and that he was actually engaged in conversation with no less a personage than Mr. Blackburne, the proprietor of the house next door, what dark suspicions of "honest Jack's" fidelity would have been excited amongst them! Nevertheless such was the fact. Mr. Lawless, who was very near-sighted, and quite too self-engrossed to doubt his own precision upon any occasion, had alighted at the mansion of the learned sergeant in mistake for that of his agitating neighbour. He ascended the stairs, was announced to the amazement of a select circle of Conservatives, who were assembled without fearing the irruption of such a startling character, and marching into the centre of the room, turned round with his customary air of grandeur, put his glass to his eye, and began to survey the company. The first countenance he recognised was that of his involuntary host. "Ah, Blackburne, glad to see you here; very cold, isn't it?" The courteous and good-humoured sergeant was too much amused at the obvious cause of the mistake abruptly to correct it. Some words of commonplace were interchanged; and

it was not until Mr. Lawless asked how it happened that he did not see "his valued and invaluable friend Richard," that he was made aware of his blunder. His account of the scene to his fellow-agitators, when he did find them, afforded no little merriment, and during the earlier part of the evening "the cabinet" enjoyed unbroken harmony.

At length Mr. Blake, with appropriate preface, introduced the business of the evening. He extolled Lord Anglesea, dwelt long upon the claim his recent conduct and loss of office gave him to their respect and regard; and concluded a somewhat florid appeal to the sense of national duty and gratitude by professing to quote the passage in which the Marquis recommended "that they should *dissolve* the Association." The quick eye of the giver of the feast perceived at a glance that the effect of this mal-adroit harangue was exactly the opposite that it had been intended to produce. To talk about duty and gratitude under the circumstances of protracted tantalization and reiterated disappointment, in despite of which the popular organization had grown up to a position of menacing strength and power, was worse than idle. Before he could interpose, however, any observation calculated to efface the impression thus caused, Mr.

Ford inquired if the letter adverted to was the same which he had perused before dinner? For if so, he thought the advice given by Lord Anglesea was not that they should *dissolve*, but that they ought to *suspend* for the present the meetings of the Association. On reference to the passage, this version proved to be correct. Old feelings of distrust were aroused, and a debate of some hours' duration ended in hot words, and the mutual confirmation of each side in their own opinions. Next day the Association met, and the question was discussed without any definite result. But the urgency of the course recommended daily increased, and similar suggestions continued to be made from other quarters. Soon after the intentions of Ministers had been declared, it happened that, one evening at the house of Lady Morgan, a letter from Mr. Hyde Villiers to his brother (the present Earl of Clarendon), then Commissioner of Customs in Dublin, was shown to Mr. Woulffe. It presented anew the considerations stated by Lord Anglesea; and coming from one who was believed to be aware of the feelings and sentiments of the Government at the time, it naturally carried no little weight. At the instance of Mr. Woulffe, the contents of the letter were communicated to Mr. Sheil, who had invited a second party to meet

at dinner the following day. On this occasion Mr. Villiers and other advocates of prudent counsels were present, as well as several of the more determined adherents of a different policy. Whether the company happened to contain a more decided preponderance on the side of moderation, or that the abandonment by Ministers of their former opinions had become so generally understood as virtually to quench all doubts as to the speedy and final issue of the great controversy, considerably less resistance was offered to the course suggested than there had previously been. Mr. Sheil undertook the task of endeavouring to obtain its formal adoption without further delay. On the 12th of February he moved that the Association should, at its rising on that day, stand totally dissolved. The conclusion of his speech was in these words:—"The object of this body was, and is, Catholic Emancipation; that object is, in my judgment, already obtained. Nothing except our own imprudence can now defeat it. The end being achieved, wherefore should we continue to exist? What are we to do? In a few days an Act of Parliament will put us down. How is the interval to be employed? In making of harangues, forsooth—in the delivery of fine fragments of rhetoric, and in

proclamations of our own dignity and importance? If the Minister acts a false part in our regard, we can readily rally again; but if a fair and equitable adjustment of the question be made, he is an enemy of his country who would perpetuate its divisions. The course which I recommend is this: Let us determine to dissolve; let us pass a series of resolutions declaratory of our motives for so doing; let us protest against any unnecessary abandonment of the rights of citizens; let us discontinue the collection of the rent, but preserve the finance committee, in order to pay our debts, and wind up our pecuniary concerns; let its meetings be private, in order that there may be no pretence for alleging that we maintain a shadow of the Association; and let its measures be subject to the revision of an aggregate meeting."*

After considerable debate the motion was carried, and this memorable confederacy, which under various forms had existed for a period of nearly six years, separated to meet no more. The Suppression Bill passed rapidly through both Houses. Meantime the Home Secretary, who had resigned his seat for the University of Oxford, was defeated in the attempt to

* Speech of Mr. Sheil on the dissolution of the Catholic Association.

obtain his re-election, and was obliged to resume his place in the Commons as member for the borough of Westbury. Regardless, nevertheless, of the outcry raised against them, ministers resolved to persevere.

Yet after all the Duke had nearly failed. The assent of the Sovereign once obtained, his Grace had, with characteristic coolness, occupied himself with the means by which the intended measures were to be carried. He gave himself but little concern about the discontent of those whose cause he had abandoned as no longer tenable; and hardly thought it possible, that by intrigue at the palace they could thwart his now settled purpose, or warp the mind of his Majesty from the course which, after many months of deliberation, he had authorised his ministers to announce to Parliament in his name.

Lord Anglesea had been recalled, the Catholic Association suppressed, and Mr. Peel had sacrificed the representation of Oxford. Notice had been given of the introduction of the contemplated Relief Bill for Thursday, the 5th March; yet, even then secret debate continued to be held in the royal closet, as to whether the whole policy of the responsible advisers of the Crown should not be abandoned. Lords Sidmouth and Eldon had used their privilege as privy coun-

cillors, to work upon the vacillating and resentful temper of the King; and on the 28th February the Chancellor was informed by his Majesty that he felt disposed to withdraw his sanction from further proceeding with the measure. The Premier was at Strathfieldsaye, where, as was his custom, he entertained the judges of assize previous to the opening of the commission for the county. A numerous party had been assembled on the occasion; and after his guests had retired, the Duke, as was his wont, withdrew to his study, where he remained occupied with his varied correspondence until an advanced hour in the morning. Before daybreak his solitude was disturbed by an unlooked-for visitor. Lord Lyndhurst presented himself, and communicated the extraordinary piece of information, that the sanction of the King had been withdrawn. There was no need of lengthened conference. The resolution of the Duke was speedily taken, and accompanied by the Chancellor, he set out at once for Brighton. His resignation was offered, and the reason specifically assigned. An interval of hesitation followed; but when called upon to form a Cabinet of resistance, the veteran advisers of the monarch shrunk from the desperate attempt as vain. George the Fourth was obliged to yield, and when the Home

Secretary, three days afterwards, rose to move for a Committee of the whole House on the Catholic claims, he emphatically stated that he did so on the part of a united Cabinet, and with the full sanction of the Crown. The measure was passed in the Commons on the 31st March, by a majority of 178; and in the Lords the second reading was carried on the 4th April, by a majority of 104. On the 13th it received the royal assent. "After all I had heard in my visits, not a day's delay!" writes Lord Eldon in bitterness of soul.

On receipt of the intelligence in Dublin, a public meeting was convened to consider the best means of preventing any undue display of popular exultation. The meeting was held at the Corn Exchange rooms, so long the central scene of agitation, Sir Thomas Esmonde, Mr. Arthur Guiness, and Mr. Sheil taking part in its proceedings. At their instance, resolutions were passed declaring that they regarded "not as a triumph over any class of their fellow-subjects, but as a measure of strict justice and of sound policy, the removal of the badge of inferiority from the Catholics without encroaching on the rights and privileges of the Protestants;" and "that while those opinions had long been familiar to the minds of the Roman

Catholics of Ireland, and their numerous highly-gifted and distinguished supporters of every other religious persuasion, they could not forget that there was a portion of their fellow-countrymen whose sentiments were of an opposite character. They would therefore strongly recommend to their fellow-citizens to abstain from any demonstrations of triumph, such as bonfires, illuminations, &c., which might compromise the public peace, or give offence to men whose opinions, however erroneous, were in some instances the result of honest convictions." These injunctions were scrupulously obeyed, and the first-fruits of Emancipation were thus manifested in conduct eminently marked by tolerance and forbearance. "A greater calm has already been produced in Ireland," said Sir Robert Peel, "than I ever knew to exist there. There is no spirit of vulgar triumph displayed on the part of the Roman Catholics."*

The bill for abolishing the forty-shilling freehold franchise encountered little opposition. It was assented to by Mr. Brougham as "the price—the almost extravagant price," he said, "of the inestimable good which would result from the Relief Bill." Sir J. Mackintosh found it "a tough morsel, difficult

* Speech, 17th March.

to swallow;" and it was opposed as unjust and unnecessary by Lord Palmerston, Mr. Huskisson, and Lord Duncannon. On a division, however, the minority numbered but seventeen.

In a letter written from circuit,* while the Relief Bill was passing through Parliament, Mr. Sheil notices the lively sense of satisfaction wherewith the certainty of its success was everywhere regarded. In Wexford, a feeling of deep gratitude for concession unattended with any displeasure at the Disfranchisement Bill appeared to prevail. In Waterford, an attempt was made by Mr. D. Ronayne to get up a public meeting against the Disfranchisement Bill; but the recollections of the contest of 1826, and of its consequences, were still too fresh in men's minds, and the attempt failed. The great majority of proprietors rejoiced at the change, and the body of the people themselves exhibited no sort of discontent. Through the rest of the country, the conviction was spreading that nothing should be done that could by any possibility counteract the Duke, or throw an obstacle in his way. To another friend he observed, "that in Tipperary there seemed little disposition at this time to find fault with the restrictive conditions

* To W. H. Curran, 11th March, 1829.

of the measure. An idea prevailed that the raising of the electoral qualification would tend to diminish the violence of party contests, inasmuch as it would greatly lessen the number of those legally entitled to take part in them. Several of the gentry affected to attribute the peculiar atrocities which characterized that county to numerous contested elections which infected the magistracy with a spirit of partisanship, and thus rendered justice in its inferior, but perhaps most important, departments corrupt. "The rivulets that fed the larger streams were all poisoned." How short-sighted or insincere were these views, a very little time sufficed to show. Party conflicts are not bereft of their tendencies to generate exasperation and ill-will, by the limitation of the suffrage to a number too small to express fairly the opinions of the community, and yet too large to be silently bribed or openly bullied by a few individuals. The statutable exclusion of thousands of poor men from the exercise of the right they had hitherto possessed, avowedly because they had voted in accordance with their own feelings, naturally led to the exertion of their influence and interference in another and less constitutional manner. Popular candidates soon learned to appreciate the value of the sympathies of the non-electors; and

these in their turn speedily assumed the privilege of offering emphatic advice to the comparative few who were still allowed to retain the right of voting.

Nevertheless it is unquestionably true that, in 1829, no serious effort was made, either in or out of Parliament, to resist an act by which more than two-thirds of the entire constituency of Ireland were disfranchised. As the price, in truth the only price exacted for the concession of religious freedom, it was acquiesced in almost without a murmur. But there was something more than this. A painful conviction pervaded the whole community of the false and unfair position in which the forty-shilling freeholders had been placed. Upon them had fallen the brunt of the final battle for Emancipation. What Burke and Fox, Grattan and Plunket, Wellesley and Canning, had argued for in vain, the votes of these poor men had achieved. Too many proofs had been given that for their revolt from their landlords there could be no forgiveness, unless in so far as it might be expected that the object of their sudden mutiny having been gained, they would prudently relapse into the helotism in which they had formerly lain. Who that sincerely honoured the self-devotion and courage which so many of them had shown, could desire to

see them exposed perpetually to the temptations of intimidation, or the ignominy of renewed serfhood? Yet who that was to share in the benefits they had contributed so directly to secure, could openly assent to the proposal that they should be stript of the only political privilege they had ever enjoyed? When the Relief Bill and the Disfranchising Bill had passed, some indignant speeches were made, and pledges offered to seek for the rescinding of the restrictive condition; but, from that day to the present, no effort worthy of the name has been made in Ireland to obtain an extension of the suffrage commensurate with that which in 1829 was taken away, or to induce the legislature to concede the principle of protection to the voter, without which any such extension must to the humbler classes be devoid of half its worth.

CHAPTER XIV.

1829—1830.

Relief from the labours of agitation—Civil equality still unrealized—Policy recommended by Mr. Sheil and Dr. Doyle—The bar—Education—Poor laws—Counsel for Lord G. Beresford—Second marriage—Contest for Louth—Classical reading—King's counsel—Returned for Milborne Port—First speech in Parliament—Early impressions of the House—Brooke's club.

In the year 1829, Mr. Sheil had attained considerable eminence at the bar. During the spring circuit he had been very generally engaged throughout, and his retainers in civil cases were so numerous that he was forced to decline criminal business. Writing from Clonmel, he says, "You will be glad to learn that I was employed in almost every case, either to state or to speak to evidence; and by two speeches in very remarkable actions I have, I think (though I

may be deceived), greatly added to my reputation. King's counsel were left out in some instances in order that I might have precedence. The people and his Majesty have of late begun to differ in the selection of their advocates."* During the summer assizes of the same year, he was engaged as leading counsel in a singular action for libel, brought by a Miss Anthony against another young lady, a Miss E———. Instigated by jealousy, the defendant had circulated a marvellous tale of shame and guilt regarding her rival, and undertook to furnish the authorities with proofs of the minutest particulars. The whole story turned out to be a mere fabrication, but its circulation had caused infinite pain and injury to a young and innocent woman, and the suit was brought for the recovery of damages and the public vindication of her character. The trial excited no little interest. It was an occasion eminently suited for the display of advocacy of a high order, and Mr. Sheil's appeal to the jury fully realized the anticipations that had been formed of it. In an article published in The New Monthly, the following November, entitled, "Notes upon Circuit," an account is given of this and several other interesting cases in which he was engaged. But

* Extract of a letter to W. H. Curran, March 23rd, 1829.

it is not unworthy of notice, that he does not mention his own name in the narrative, even incidentally.

Though fond of praise, and capable of enjoying in a high degree the excitement peculiar to the discharge of tribunitial functions, he had for some time become weary of the work of agitation, in which there was necessarily much to disenchant and disgust a mind constituted like his. "You cannot conceive," he exclaimed, "what a relief it is to me to be liberated from the necessity of attending aggregate meetings." He had had more than enough of the celebrity their plaudits could confer, and he longed for respite from the labour that, since he had got into good business in his profession, had grown somewhat irksome. With this feeling of personal relief was associated the conviction that the cessation of popular assemblies, whose emotions it was alike his task to inflame and to control, was in itself "a vast public benefit. The passions of the populace were of necessity excited, and a general feeling of insubordination was produced. We were formerly interested in awakening, we are now equally interested and bound to allay, the popular ferment. In a few months, Ireland will be a new country." These were not expressions made use of for effect, but the unaffected utterance of his

feelings to one who shared his personal and political intimacy.

And had either wisdom or generosity swayed the conduct of the Government, the anticipations thus sanguinely formed would probably have been realized. The great act of renunciation by the Legislature of the policy of sectarian exclusion, legitimately implied its practical abandonment by the administration. So long as Parliament affected to adhere to the principle, those entrusted with the execution of the laws might justify the maintenance of a rigorous monopoly in all the trusts and dignities of the State, by the reiteration of Lord Sidmouth's maxim, that their duty was "to execute the laws, not to change them." But from the day that Parliament declared it to be expedient that civil disabilities on account of religion should cease, it became the manifest duty of the King's ministers to give possession to those whose right of entry had been decreed. Unfortunately for the peace of Ireland, the King's ministers judged differently. They had shattered their party almost beyond repair by their determination to carry the statutable settlement of the Catholic question; and yet they were content after it was done to leave all the passions and ambitions, the jealousies and aspira-

tions, which that question had for forty years tended to excite, unsettled. It is no longer a secret, that to the spirit of pique and grudge which actuated George IV., this miserable course was in the first instance attributable. His Majesty consoled Lord Eldon and others in their disappointment by the assurance that he would make no Catholic peers or judges, and that in short he would do all that in him lay to baffle the intents of the Bill. But whatever allowance may be made for ministerial compliance with such a purpose, while yet the vexation of having been compelled to yield was fresh and recent in the royal mind, it is impossible to exonerate the administration of 1829 from the responsibility of having acquiesced in the systematic suspension of the benefits Parliament had intended to secure by the act of Emancipation. If they hoped thereby to retrieve the loss they had sustained in party adherence during the session, they calculated ill, as the event was soon destined to prove; and if they supposed that the great community whose long banishment from places of honour and emolument had been at length revoked, would be contented under its capricious and arbitrary prolongation, they were still more strangely mistaken.

Mr. Sheil at first appears to have doubted whether his peculiar offences might not be remembered so as to cause his exclusion from the benefit of the amnesty which was generally anticipated. "It would be of very great importance to me," he observed, in a letter of the 7th April, 1829, "especially after my recent success upon circuit, to get a silk gown; I think it probable, however, that it will not be given. For this I am prepared. It will certainly be of material injury to me, even with my own party, that when the body of the Catholic bar are promoted I should be left behind, and I well know what sort of sympathy I am to expect from such a community as the Catholics of Ireland. I think therefore that it behoves me to take a bold step."* He then proceeded at some length to discuss a project he had already formed for obtaining a seat in Parliament. This would, he conceived, countervail the slight which he apprehended might be invidiously put upon him, and enable him to sustain the position of influence he had acquired. He owned that it involved some risk, but as he was in receipt of a good income from the bar, was a widower, and had but one child, he thought he might venture to take the course pro-

* Letter to Peirce Mahony, Esq., 7th April, 1829.

posed. As no immediate opening offered, he was compelled to postpone for a season his plans of Parliamentary ambition. To this he was somewhat more easily reconciled by the course of undiscriminating injustice taken by the Government. Far from being singled out for slight, he found that all of his persuasion were treated similarly.

As month after month rolled by without any evidence that a practical change of system was contemplated, sentiments of disappointment and impatience began to be felt by those, who seemed to have exchanged great popularity and power for the bootless name of equality with the rest of their fellow-citizens. November term approached without any intimation having been given that the legal rank to which he had earned so incontestable a claim, was to be conceded to O'Connell. The sense of injury and slight, though in a less degree, was shared by Mr. O'Loghlin, Mr. Woulfe, Mr. Ball, and Mr. Sheil. Their continued exclusion from the Inner Bar could not be regarded otherwise than as a penalty inflicted on them on account of their creed. In a statement, drawn up at the request of a friend for the purpose of being submitted to persons then in power, of the political condition of Ireland at this period, and of

the policy which the Relief Bill required as its fitting complement, Mr. Sheil strongly urged what he felt to be due to the profession to which he belonged. "In every department of the State," he said, "to which Roman Catholics are now admissible, they conceive it to be their right to be promoted. This observation applies more immediately to the administration of the law. The Roman Catholic bar in a great degree represent the intellect and the feelings of their community. If placed in stations of honourable prominence (for distinction is far more important than lucre), they will hold out in our public tribunals the ocular proofs of the fair and just spirit of the Government."

His views of the policy which it behoved Government to pursue were not limited to questions of professional precedency or profit. He already discerned the consequences that were likely to arise if an illiberal system were continued. The mechanism of agitation had indeed ceased to move, and its curious concatenation had been sundered; but he well knew that its links and wheels were not destroyed, and above all his keen glance discovered that the powerful mainspring which had formerly set all in motion, though seemingly at rest and relaxed, still quivered

and vibrated at every touch, and might at any moment re-assume its former functions. The more he reflected upon this state of things, and upon the condition of the mass of the population, the more he was persuaded of the urgent need there existed of taking means to show that a practical, and not merely a theoretical, change was to be achieved by Emancipation.

"I greatly fear," he said, "that the Government labour under the misapprehension, that if left to itself it will work its beneficial results without any active co-operation. I think quite otherwise; I think that an anti-Anglican party may be very easily created by the active spirits whose passion for distinction (perhaps I should call it notoriety) has been fed for so many years by popular commotion. Already efforts are making to substitute for the Catholic question some topic as exciting, which will call the people of this country into a confederacy more powerful than any which previously existed. This then is not the time for inertness and torpor upon the part of the executive, who will have to determine whether the men who "wielded at will the fierce democracy" are to continue the use of that formidable implement, or to become sincerely and

permanently attached to the constitutional order of things. Individuals will soon have to choose the part which they are to perform for life. Events are rapidly coming on which will supersede personal inclinations, and sweep men back again into all the whirl and eddies from which they had hoped to escape. Trust me, that the people will be alive to any marks of kind feeling which shall be exhibited towards the Catholic community in the persons of individuals; whereas if nothing be done, expectation will gradually fall back from its tiptoe elevation, and discontent, embittered by disappointment, will speedily ensue."

Two important measures he believed to be indispensable, as the necessary corollaries to that already passed. The one for the removal of discontent in the matter of education; the other for the prevention of its perennial growth out of physical suffering and destitution. The expediency of endeavouring by means of both to attach the Catholic clergy to the State, seemed to him all the more obvious because he regarded as then impossible any direct endowment of that body. Their eventual payment by the State was a measure the importance of which "he was not more strongly convinced of, than of the facility with

which it might be accomplished." When examined as a witness before the select committee of 1825, he had stated his conviction that such a provision would be accepted if Emancipation were to precede it;* and now that the latter had been accomplished, his mind naturally reverted to the same idea. Instead of suggesting, however, any proposition of the kind, he would have had a different distribution made of the funds annually allotted by Parliament to purposes of public instruction. "There exists through all Ireland a great thirst for education. If the same sum which was originally intended to be applied in salaries to the priests, were to be placed in their hands, or vested in the bishops, to be distributed in the promotion of instruction through the medium of the priesthood, the latter would be immediately attached, by their personal interests, to the Government by which they were trusted. . . . . The parish priest who receives a salary will be connected with the Government by which it is supplied; the people, upon the other hand, who will participate in the benefits of this donation, so far from remonstrating against a stipend, will be grateful for it. Let a school, attached to the chapel, appear in every parish. The rising generation

* Rep. Sel. Com., 1825. Vol. viii., p. 102.

will be obviously improved; and the parents and kindred of those who are instructed will behold that their religion and their priesthood are no longer under a ban: and from the little cottage dedicated to purposes of rural learning, morality, peace and contentedness will rapidly flow. . . . . If the arguments which offer themselves in support of this view required any confirmation, I might avail myself of the high authority of Dr. Doyle, who agrees with me in the opinions which I have expressed, and who, if the Government acted judiciously in his regard, would be found in all likelihood their zealous and powerful auxiliary." These views were further expanded and enforced in an article on "The Effects of Emancipation," which appeared in the New Monthly of the ensuing December.

There was another and equally pressing question on which his sentiments coincided with those of Dr. Doyle—that, namely, of Poor-Laws. In a letter soon afterwards publicly addressed by that gifted prelate to Mr. Spring Rice, the expediency and duty were eloquently insisted on, of making a legal provision in Ireland for the maintenance of the poor. Looking at the social condition of things around them from different points of view, but with the same discerning

insight into causes and results, which constitutes one of the highest political qualities, both had come to the same conclusion, and both earnestly recommended that no more time should be lost in making property chargeable with the relief of those, when in extreme want, whom it had failed to employ. They were not insensible to the evils which the English Poor-Law system (then unreformed) had generated. These were enunciated with lucid precision by Dr. Doyle, in order that they might be guarded against in Ireland. Well might his friend and admirer point him out as eminently fitted to give the Government sagacious counsel and effective aid in what concerned the peace and welfare of the country.

O'Connell, who felt the necessity of some great social change in the condition of the country, objected to both the remedies thus proposed, and started the Repeal of the Union as a more popular alternative. He saw that a vast unemployed population, long accustomed to political excitement, could not be expected to subside peacefully into the state of mute degradation and despair from which the agitation had roused them. Their numbers were increasing, their misery deepening, and their intelligence quickening every year. In his first public letter in favour of

Repeal are these words: "The landed proprietors of Ireland are reduced to this dilemma—they must have either a Repeal of the Union or Poor-Laws. To one or the other of these they must come."*

Meanwhile the Government remained passive and inert. They rejected the advice of Mr. Sheil and Dr. Doyle, and affected to regard O'Connell's threat to resuscitate agitation with contempt. With strange infatuation they preferred to look on and do nothing.

Early in February, 1830, Mr. Villiers Stuart having relinquished the representation of Waterford, Lord George Beresford sought to regain the position he had lost in 1826 as member for the county. Through the intervention of Mr. Pierce Mahony it was proposed to Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Sheil that they should act as counsel for him at the coming election; and retainers were sent to both of them accordingly. It was urged on behalf of the Waterford family (who had voted with Ministers for the Relief Bill), that by consenting to act in this capacity they would furnish a proof that old enmities were forgotten, and that the long existing cause of quarrel between creeds having been removed, there was no disposition to

* First letter on the Repeal of the Union to the people of Ireland, 24th September, 1830.

keep alive the distinctions that had unhappily perverted all the relations of professional and social life. Mr. O'Connell was at first understood to have yielded to these suggestions, and to have left Mr. Mahony under the impression that he accepted the retainer. Subsequently he was induced however to decline it, upon the ground that his acting for Lord George Beresford might be regarded as inconsistent with the course of his political conduct at the time. Mr. Sheil was embarrassed by no such considerations. From the day on which the Association had been dissolved, he had abstained altogether from taking any part in public affairs, and had devoted himself exclusively to the duties of his profession, which were daily becoming more considerable. Having once consented to act as counsel for Lord George, he disdained to shrink from the performance of his professional obligations, because in the newspapers and elsewhere obloquy and abuse might be directed against him for not doing so. Mr. Barron, a Catholic gentleman of property in the county, had entered the field as a rival candidate; and a strong feeling of preference naturally existed in his favour among the community, a vast majority of whom were attached to the same creed; but no consideration of this kind appeared to Mr. Sheil sufficient

to justify the attempt openly made to dictate to him in a matter strictly professional. He determined to set it at defiance, and proceeded to Waterford on the eve of the election, prepared to render to his client any services which he could with propriety be called on to perform; and this he did so effectually that, to use his own expression in describing the affair to a friend, "the Barron party said that his interference as counsel had ruined them; while he was assailed with gross vituperation by the mob, who charged him with being the 'decoy duck' for the Catholic voters." Lord G. Beresford was returned by a majority of 129.

Before the death of George IV. a disposition was manifested by Ministers to make some minor concessions to public opinion, which had hitherto been withheld. At the instance of Lord Francis L. Gower,* several members of the Catholic bar received the distinction of silk gowns. Mr. O'Connell was still unwisely and unjustly excluded; but at the close of Trinity term, 1830, Mr. Sheil, Mr. O'Loghlen, Mr. Ball, and Mr. Cruise were called to the inner bar.

On the 20th of July he contracted a second marriage, with Anastasia widow of Mr. Power of Gurteen in the county of Waterford, with whom he

* The present Earl of Ellesmere.

had been for some time acquainted, and with whom he lived in uninterrupted happiness during the remainder of his life. This amiable and accomplished lady was the daughter of John Lalor Esq. of Crenagh in the county of Tipperary, from whom, as co-heiress with her sister, who married Richard M. Bellew Esq., she inherited considerable fortune. By this marriage Mr. Sheil became independent of the resources of his profession, and he thus felt more than ever drawn towards the pursuit of a Parliamentary career. He readily acceded therefore to the wishes of many of his friends in Louth to become a candidate for that county at the general election caused by the death of the King. The struggle was a severe one. Mr. A. Dawson, who retained all the popularity acquired at his previous election in 1826, had no disposition to retire; and it was on all hands felt that he was entitled to the support of the whole of the Liberal party; but for the second seat three claimants appeared in the field—Mr. M'Clintock, who stood upon the Tory interest, Mr. Richard M. Bellew, and Mr. Sheil. The effect of the division thus caused in the popular ranks was, as was soon foreseen, the defeat of both the last-named candidates, and the return of the former. Had any one during the protracted struggle

for Emancipation ventured to foretell that upon the first opportunity that should occur, he that had done so much towards its accomplishment would be left without a seat in Parliament—the only recompence he ever sought at the hands of his fellow-countrymen—the prognostic would have been treated as a calumny, or as the ebullition of envy and of spleen; and yet it so fell out, and the matter seemed to cause little astonishment or concern. On his way from the scene of his defeat, Mr. Sheil visited the neighbouring county of Meath, where a sharp contest was likewise anticipated. At the last moment Mr. Lawless unexpectedly withdrew. In their disappointment sinister rumours were credited by the populace regarding his motives; and in the midst of the angry excitement that ensued Mr. Sheil arrived. From some cause which has never been explained, the ill humour of the multitude, far from being controlled by his presence, seemed rather to be exasperated thereby. He would willingly have taken the position vacated by Mr. Lawless, had he been permitted to do so; but blind suspicion and resentment prevailed, and he was actually advised by those who were solicitous on his account, not to provoke insult by appearing in the court-house or the street. Such were the first-fruits

of his reward; and it was long before their bitter flavour passed away.

The autumn of 1830 he passed for the most part in retirement. His favourite books at this time were the Greek Orators, to the study of which he devoted peculiar care. For Demosthenes he had always entertained feelings of enthusiastic admiration. He seemed much taken by an opinion of Lord Brougham, then much spoken of, that from that source he traced much of his own oratorical success. Æschines, Isocrates, and Thucydides likewise engaged many of his leisure hours. He often likewise recurred in after years to minute facts and descriptions in Josephus and Eusebius, and other writers on the early history of the Church. "He had embraced too, at that period, the New Testament as a Greek and religious study, and was duly alive to its contents in both respects. 'St. Paul's speeches,' as he used to call them, in the Acts, especially that before Agrippa, greatly captivated him."* His religious convictions were doubtless strengthened by these pursuits, and when in the society of those with whom he took an interest in conversing on such subjects, he with characteristic

* Letter from Rev. John Ennis to the Author, 24th March, 1854.

eagerness avowed the retention of those impressions which had early been formed in his mind. Like most men of vigorous and independent habits of thought, he had, when at the University and the Temple, been much attracted by the philosophical opinions of writers like Gibbon and Voltaire. His fearless spirit of inquiry led him to read with eager curiosity speculative works of all kinds. For the Scotch metaphysicians and their manner of treating "the greatest of questions," he had always a strong disrelish. The exclusively analytical method failed to satisfy his imaginative mind. "There is something more," he used to say, "which they have not caught and cannot dissect;" and he had no faith in the stability of morals based upon expediency alone. Nevertheless he was long unable to eradicate the misgivings which his own meditations, and the suggestions of discursive reading, had sown within him. The dimness of doubt exercised over his mind a certain fascination. His toleration forbade him to condemn as sinful, theoretic errors which he found combined in various forms with the noblest feelings and the purest lives; and yet his whole nature recoiled from the repudiation of those mysterious tenets, as mere illusions, which had been first impressed upon his mind in childhood. Many who have

been troubled with a similar conflict of emotions pass in the world for undeviatingly devout and orthodox men, simply because they have neither the courage nor the candour to permit their half-thoughts and the flaws in their faith to become known. But such was not his way. He was incapable of habitually concealing from those who shared his intimacy the ideas uppermost in his mind; and the temptation of finding either sympathy or instruction, even from comparative strangers, continually led him to speak with startling unreserve on subjects that are conventionally approached in a very different tone. He liked to argue with men of the most opposite opinions on subjects of natural theology, and on the comparative merits of different systems of belief—less from any love of controversy, in the common acceptation of the term, than as a means of speculative investigation. When little more than nineteen, a fellow-student, with whom he was but slightly acquainted, in the Historical Society, was surprised by an abrupt interrogatory as to whether it would be easy to show that civilization and social happiness might not have equally advanced under a refined and purified system of polytheism, as under that of Christianity. The good feeling and discernment of the person thus addressed

forbade him to attribute the question to any deliberately formed opinion, whence in point of fact it never sprang: but he was not always so fortunate in finding justice or charity from those in whose presence he rashly thought aloud. Throughout the earlier part of his career, imputations were frequently cast upon his religious sincerity by those who envied his talents, or had been made to wince under the sometimes too reckless lash of his wit.

During the latter days of agitation he had striven hard to place a curb upon his love of sarcasm and badinage, the indulgence of which he found productive of serious hurt to his influence over those with whom he was compelled to act. But with the attitude and garb of demagogue, he was but too glad to lay aside a restraint that had always been irksome. Insolence or ill-nature there was indeed none, even in his jests at the expense of others; but the ludicrous side of things rarely escaped his observation, and where others laughed inwardly he laughed aloud. Being asked on one occasion who was the Mr. Redmond that had made a violent speech against the Government, he replied, "Mr. Redmond is a very worthy and well-disposed man, but he happens to be patriot to a brewery."

His society at this time became more sought after

and appreciated. He was not unfrequently a guest at the tables of persons whose official or political position would in Ireland have previously formed a barrier to any social intercourse. It happened that the day on which the news arrived of the defeat of ministers on Sir Henry Parnell's motion regarding the Civil List, he dined with the Duke of Northumberland, who then filled the office of Viceroy. The consequences of the event seemed to be fully understood by all who were present. Displacement was too obviously uppermost in the thoughts of the greater number; the anecdotes and pleasantries of Sir Philip Crampton extorted but a mechanical smile: and the whole affair was as dismal and as dull as the convivial obsequies of party usually are. The following day brought the intelligence that the Wellington Cabinet was at an end, and that Earl Grey had been summoned to form a new administration.

Soon after the Whig Government had been formed, he visited London, when Lord Anglesea, who was about to resume the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, desired to see him. The acquaintance thus commenced was soon attended with results equally gratifying and advantageous to him. His exclusion from Parliament was the goading thought from

which, when alone or among intimates, he constantly owned his inability to escape. To disappointment was added the sense of ingratitude and injustice; and his child-like delight may therefore be conceived when a communication was made to him early in the year that Lord Anglesea was willing that he should be returned for Milborne Port, a borough in Dorsetshire, one of the seats for which belonged to the Marquis. Disgusted with the manner in which he had been defeated in Louth, and at the little concern which his exclusion from Parliament seemed to create beyond the circle of his personal friends, he readily embraced the offer. Arrangements for the purpose were easily made, and on the 25th of February a new writ was moved for in the room of Mr. G. S. Byng, who had been appointed Comptroller of the Household of the Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland. In the course of the following week the ceremony of his nomination and return was duly performed; and on the 8th of March he took the oaths and his seat as a member of the House of Commons. The long day-dream of his youth and manhood was at length fulfilled. This was for him Catholic Emancipation.

Nor was it long before he mingled in the wordy fray. His maiden speech was delivered on the 21st

of March upon the second reading of the Reform Bill. As may be supposed it had been prepared with no little care. A few days previously he had gone over the topics on which he meant to dwell, in conversation with Mr. W. H. Curran and Mr. Wallis. The latter had long made the tone and temper of the House of Commons his peculiar study, and was no incompetent judge of what was likely to suit the taste of that assembly. He approved of the design and most of the details of the contemplated address, but deprecated the introduction of one passage, which Sheil imagined would have been well calculated for humorous effect: "The Opposition say that those who sit for close boroughs upon our side are actuated by selfish motives; but as one of the members who happen to sit for boroughs that are to be disfranchised, I can repudiate the charge, for I feel like the apprentice depicted by Hogarth as busily engaged in sawing away the beam of the obnoxious sign on which he is astride." To this his friend strongly objected. "Whatever you do, beware of setting the House laughing at you, or associating with yourself any ludicrous image: they are well enough disposed to do that without your inviting them; make them laugh at anybody else you like, but take care of raising a titter

or a jest at your own expense." The advice thus given was not thrown away.

A debate of seven nights, on the motion for leave to introduce the measure, had deprived his subject of some of its freshness, but the interests at stake were so great and varied, that public attention rather increased in wakefulness as the memorable struggle went on; and within the House no little curiosity was felt to hear the first efforts of the man who, next to O'Connell, had for several years occupied the most prominent place in Irish affairs. He followed Sir R. Vyvyan, one of the members for Cornwall, who had moved the rejection of the bill.

"The honourable baronet who had preceded him had passed in rapid transition from India to Athens and thence to Italy, in reference to this question, and had then proceeded to animadvert on the French revolution. He had taken a most discursive view. He had embraced Ireland, India, Venice, and the whole empire of France in his comprehensive disquisition. Was it not wonderful that he should not have said one word of Cornwall? He (Mr. Sheil) expected that the honourable baronet, having peculiar opportunities of knowing the advantages of the close borough system, would have illustrated them by some peculiarly felicitous inferences. He could only account for his entire omission of this almost personal topic by supposing that, placed at a great political elevation, from which an immense horizon was opened upon him, he did not see the petty objects beneath. . . . It was said that the country prospered, that the machine worked well; that England with that fiscal prodigy, a debt of 800,000,000*l.* on her

back, still stood erect and firm; that the expenditure of countless treasure, and the spendthrift prodigality of her life-blood, were not too large a price for freedom; that whatever might have befallen she might proudly contrast her condition with that of the continent, and survey the mighty labour of other nations who were tempest-tossed in revolutionary agitation, with a pleasurable consciousness of her own security. To all this he answered, that there existed within herself a settled and general discontent which was derived from causes of a permanent nature, and which instead of being the mere ebullition of transitory passion, flowed out of a deep and constant source. It was idle to say that it had not long existed because it had only recently appeared. The sudden force with which it had burst forth was a proof that the materials of eruption had been long accumulating. It was equally nugatory to say that the press had done all this. Would the press relinquish its natural vocation? And was it not much wiser, instead of wrangling against its influence, to consider those materials in the shape of abuses upon which it exerted its powerful operation? Was the discontent well founded? That was the main question, almost the only one. Were all the evils of which the press and the people complained merely imaginary? Had they no existence except in the distempered fancy of political hypochondriacs? Or was there a gangrene that could be felt and touched, and that was visibly and palpably eating its way into the vitals of the State? He would abstain from going over the beaten track in which so many had gone before him, and from expatiating upon the gross abuses of the present representative system in detail. This single broad fact was, in his mind, sufficient to call forth the national repudiation of the House of Commons—a few great proprietors of boroughs were enabled to control the minister, and by their oligarchical coalition to dictate to their Sovereign, and to lord it over the people. That such a system should exist was a great calamity in itself; but the evil was heightened by many sordid accompaniments. Seats in Parliament were made the subject of

bargain and sale; and an almost open mart, a common staple, a Parliamentary bazaar, was established for the vendition of the franchises of the people. A Sultana on her marriage had usually one province awarded to her for her necklace, another for her bracelets, and a third for her girdle: under the system of Parliamentary proprietorship, it would be no matter of surprise to see a lady of fashion receiving Old Sarum for pin-money and Gatton for her dower. The people thought it a perfect mockery to call this a national representation; and instead of seeing in members of Parliament mirrors of the public mind, they beheld in them pocket-glasses in which the images of a few great nominators were faithfully reflected. By these means the moral as well as the political interests of the country were affected. When lords transmuted their influence in Parliament into money, by what an easy process of imitative alchemy the humbler voter could convert his miserable suffrage into gold. How could we condemn bribery in the one when we gave it a countenance in the other? Was the grossness of the prostitution palliated by the largeness of its wages? There were statutes indeed against it: so much the worse. Hypocrisy was superadded to corruption when the law occasionally immolated some incautious offender who committed a petty larceny of the people's rights, and whose guilt, upon the principles of Spartan morality, was not determined by the delinquency of the theft, but the folly of the detection. And was it to be wondered at that a nation who prized virtue as well as freedom should feel indignant, and even exasperated, at these misdoings? Was it matter of surprise that there should exist through the empire but one feeling of reprobation at this flagitious traffic? But gross, nay monstrous, as these abuses were, there were men who found advantages in their existence, and whom these deformities in the constitution inspired with perverse admiration."*

Among his friends the *éclat* of this first speech in

* Hansard, 1831. Vol. iii., p. 646.

Parliament hardly equalled their wishes, although in some respects it exceeded their anticipations. There had long been a traditional fear, that no man whose style of eloquence had been altogether formed on the Celtic side of the Channel, and who had grown habituated to the modes of thought and expression most popular there, could easily adapt himself to the tone of feeling and of criticism prevalent in the House of Commons. Few things are indeed more subtle or less possible to define than what is so often vaguely talked of as the sense of the House. It is easy enough to point out signal instances of its prompt resentment at violations of good taste; and equally striking examples of its habitual toleration of homeliness and clumsiness of expression, where the matter is weighty and the purpose sound. No board of examiners in prosody can be more cynically severe; no dame-school class in syntax, more readily forgiving. No curious mechanism of phrase, recondite learning, or novelty of illustration, avails to hush the fatal buzz of inattention with which the young aspirant to the fame of statesmanship, who has come laden to town with an Oxford reputation, is sometimes received; and yet no complication of blunders, hesitations, and faults of every kind, seem to detract in

the least degree from the respectful anxiety with which the person who follows him in debate is listened to. Nothing seems so capricious, so fastidious, and so wilful, as the judgment given *de die in diem* by the House of Commons regarding its own members; and nothing probably is more difficult to understand and appreciate thoroughly than the unwritten canons with which those judgments are in the main strictly in accordance. It takes most men years to do so; there are exceptions, doubtless, but they are rarer than either impetuous earnestness or impatient egotism can readily be brought to believe.

Mr. Sheil was fully conscious of the difficulties he had to contend with; and he knew that not the least of these arose from the nature of the rhetorical celebrity which he had acquired in the country whence he came. The failure of Flood, and the narrow escape from a similar fate of Grattan, on his first appearance in St. Stephen's; the little effect produced by North, and even by O'Connell, in the then existing Parliament; if they contributed to fire his ambition, were calculated also to excite within him many misgivings.* With instinctive discernment he felt that the great obstacle he had to overcome was his own ignorance of the feelings and susceptibilities

of the House. These he resolved to study, and he knew that they must be studied experimentally. Success to be genuine and permanent, was he believed only to be gradually acquired; and he used to laugh at the notion of any man without great fortune, high office, or the claim of being the representative of some great class or interest, essaying to take the House by surprise. He did not accordingly stake too many hopes upon his first effort. It was intended to be tentative, and it answered his purpose by enabling him to feel his way. Many things were clearer to him after he had passed that ordeal.

Talking with Moore, as they sat together at the Athenæum, he adverted to their old discussions about the use of imagery in Parliamentary speaking. He was more convinced than ever that his friend was wrong in supposing, as in his "Life of Sheridan" he seemed to do, that the days of idealism in oratory were passed. He was full of instances of fine thoughts, finely and even fancifully expressed, which he had heard applauded in the House. He did not say, but one may well believe, that the echo of the cheers he had himself obtained still rang in his ear. He admitted, however, that "rhetorical flights" were rare, and

that they required to be what he called "well done."* But the most important conviction that early forced itself upon him, was the superior if not the supreme value of the power of lucid and impressive statement. "There is nothing," he would say, "that the House is so fond of as facts; if they are new and striking, so much the better; but it is not necessary they should be new, if they are choice and in season, and look fresh, and seem as if you had gathered them yourself; facts—there is nothing so hard to manage with complete mastery; there are not half-a-dozen men in Parliament who really know how to deal with them."

A clever caricature of his first appearance in Parliament forms one of the objects in the magic lanthorn, with which "Blackwood" used to amuse the public at that time, under the name of "Noctes Ambrosianæ." In the course of the imaginary dialogue, Tickler professes to give pen-and-ink portraits of Jeffrey, Macaulay, Graham, and other well-known individuals, who took part in the debates on the Reform Bill. These sketches are full of humour, and often contain bold and life-like touches of delineation; but they

* Moore's Diary, April 22nd, 1831.

are frequently made the vehicle of party abuse and of ruthless exaggeration of personal defects and peculiarities. After dealing with most of the eminent persons on the Liberal side of the House in this fashion, North asks his after-dinner gossip whether among the declaimers he had heard Sheil? Tickler replies that he had, and that he thought him "a very clever one, too, though not so effective as Macaulay" on the occasion referred to. He was not sure whether Sheil might not be "the abler man of the two. The House gave him a most gracious hearing, and he himself for one was much edified." He then proceeds to enumerate each defect of voice, manner, and appearance, with all the particularity of spleen; and, having daubed the picture sufficiently, exclaims—"But never mind; wait a little, and this vile machinery will do wonders. To make some amends for her carelessness to all other external affairs, nature has given him as fine a pair of eyes as ever graced human head—large, deeply set, dark, liquid, flashing like gems, and these fix you like a basilisk, so that you forget everything else about him." Upon the whole it was impossible, according to this most unsparing of critics, to listen for ten minutes "without giving oneself up to the feeling

that you were in the presence of a man of genius."*

He continued to adhere to the habit of careful arrangement and verbal preparation of his speeches, and seldom was tempted by any unexpected opening in debate to deviate from his rule; but as he acquired confidence, and began to feel more at home in the House, he learned to interweave extempore replies and passing notices of previous speakers with the fabric of his argument. Many of these sudden interspersions, coming as they did naturally, and with obvious provocation, were peculiarly successful. He knew the additional hold which is thus to be acquired over the sympathies of an audience, and often sought to enlist them at the outset of a serious and elaborately-prepared address by a few sentences of easy and almost conversational preface, having reference to what had gone immediately before in debate, but generally containing some lively repartee at the expense of an unguarded opponent, or playful repudiation of the untenable arguments put forward by some injudicious friend. In conversation with Lord Plunket, the subject of these interpolations

* Blackwood's Magazine, August, 1831. "Noctes Ambrosianæ," p. 411.

impromptu gave rise to more than one curious remark from that great master of the art. He cited in illustration one of Grattan's best replies, which could not possibly have been prepared. Sheil is represented by Moore,* who was present, as asking with some surprise "if Grattan could speak extempore?" Moore must have strangely misapprehended the expression which, though cast in the form of interrogation, could not have been intended to imply any doubt of the fact alleged regarding Grattan. It had often indeed been said that some of those fine bursts of feeling and invective with which in Parliament and elsewhere Grattan was wont to startle his hearers, were the result of premeditation and not the offspring of passionate impulse. This was just the question upon which so keen an analyst would have wished to learn the opinion of one who had great opportunities of observing the practice, and listening to the familiar talk, of that remarkable man; or it is easy to imagine that the question was put in a way to draw from Lord Plunket an opinion upon a point equally subtle and unsettled—namely, whether Grattan was as effective in reply when wholly unprepared as the revised and re-written version of his

* Diary, 6th April, 1832.

speeches given in print is calculated to lead one to suppose.* The rejoinder is not given by Moore; but Sheil was fond of recurring to the remarkable avowal of Lord Plunket, that he himself had never produced any great effect either in Parliament or at the bar, when he was not thoroughly and carefully prepared.

In July, 1831, he was admitted a member of Brookes' club, in which at the time there were but few of his country and persuasion. His unaffected and unassuming manner speedily rendered him a favourite. "He was," says one of his cotemporaries, "most desirous of learning the inmost social and political life of England. His appreciation and relish for good conversation were remarkable. He

* Some years afterwards a curious illustration of what is above alluded to was brought under Mr. Sheil's notice by the writer of these Memoirs. In the manuscript reports of the debates in the Irish House of Commons of 1782, the version given of the celebrated altercation between Flood and Grattan differs in many remarkable particulars from that in the published debates. The substance is indeed the same, but some harsh things are omitted in the latter, and not a few terse and trenchant expressions are likewise left out. What is still more interesting and striking is, that the logical arrangement of topics which marks the revised account, does not accurately correspond with that found in the manuscript, wherein the order is sometimes broken, palpably by the excitement and passion of the hour. Mr. Sheil was highly interested by this curious confirmation of the views he so strongly entertained regarding oratorical preparation.

was a sincere foe to mere conventionalities, and was above all disguises and false pretences of every kind. He was a good listener and an apt learner, rarely interposing, save with some keen and subtle observation, indicating quick perception and fine tact."

The qualities here indicated contributed in no slight degree to the peculiar power which he possessed of rapidly collecting, condensing, and reproducing, in some new and characteristic form, the ideas imperfectly expressed by those with whom he was conversing, or partly expressed by one individual and partly by another. Floating and unconnected truths seemed to arrange themselves in his appropriative mind by some curious law of moral affinity or attraction; no remark, however passing or fragmentary, escaped him, as if the elements of thought derived from intercourse with other men had in his mind a peculiar tendency to crystallization there. It was this that called forth frequently the exclamation from the half-inarticulate talkers and cloudy thinkers whom he often encountered,—that what he had uttered in an antithesis or an epigram, was "just what they meant to say:"—the fact being that they had only caught a glimpse of the truth through a chink in the wall of their own dulness, and that but for some aid

like his, they never would have seen it clearly or known what it actually was like.

It must be admitted however, that the impressions which his conversation left on those who knew him well differed widely, as those regarding men of fluctuating temperament are apt to do. Perhaps the most general opinion is that which is expressed in a letter from one whose intimacy with him was early formed, and continued to the latest period: "Our intercourse was chiefly in the quiet social way, at the table of a mutual friend, at his own, or at mine, where the object was more enjoyment than any effort to shine. His lively *tournure de phrase* and joyous ringing laugh left little else on the mind than the recollection of a very agreeable evening; nor did we feel the want, nor expect the contribution of those gems of eloquence which perhaps he was then elaborating to challenge our admiration in a day or two after. Like Moore, and unlike Curran, no pearls were to be picked up at the table. At the Priory an editor might in a day gather as many as would spangle his leaders for a month. But Sheil and Moore were writers and had to husband resources which they might soon require for some public occasion. Sheil from the beginning was a public creature, and his ideas took an imme-

diate public shape, either in speeches, essays, or dramatic compositions. His life was public, and his portrait lies in his works."*

* Letter from John Finlay, Esq., 20th February, 1854.

CHAPTER XV.

1831—1833.

Returned for Louth and for Milborne Port—Elects to sit for Louth—Poor laws—Motion regarding Petersfield—Conversion of tithe into rent-charge—Reform Bill for Ireland—Church cess—Repeal of the Union—Advice given by Lord Wellesley—Returned for Tipperary—Debate on the Address—The Coercion Bill—Military flogging—Poor laws—Church temporalities—Case of Captain Atcheson—Triennial Parliaments.

MINISTERS having been defeated in the Commons in their first attempt to carry a Reform Bill, a dissolution of Parliament took place in May 1831, and everywhere vigorous preparations were forthwith made on both sides for the electoral struggle, upon whose issue it was felt that the fate not only of parties but of institutions must depend.

As soon as the dissolution became known in Ireland, Mr. Sheil's friends in Louth, who had never

ceased to lament his rejection in the preceding year, urgently pressed him to seize the opportunity of obliterating his defeat; and they united in assuring him that were he once returned he might keep the seat as long as he pleased. He wrote from London without hesitation declining the offer. Again their solicitations were renewed, and many public considerations urged why he should allow himself to be put in nomination. But he had had too much experience of the instability of popular favour among his countrymen to place any dependence on the sanguine assurances of warm and excited partisans. Their individual sincerity he did not doubt; but in their ability to fulfil the political guarantee they proffered, it was not permitted him to believe. A second time he rejected the invitation; and Lord Anglesea having again placed Milborne Port at his disposal, he determined to re-enter Parliament for that borough. Some weeks later, through the intervention of one whose counsel he always regarded, as the sagacity and friendship which dictated it deserved, he was induced to reconsider the matter. As member for an independent constituency, he would feel himself more his own master. Lord Anglesea had evinced towards him indeed all the consideration and delicacy characteristic of his generous bearing; but to

be a member freely chosen for a populous county would after all place him in a more desirable position than as the avowed nominee of a member of the Government; Milborne Port was certain moreover to be disfranchised by the Reform Bill, and he would then have to seek, none could tell how soon, for a seat in Ireland. It so happened likewise that the Irish estates of the Marquis lay in Louth, where he might thus count upon deriving a certain amount of support from his influence. To these considerations he so far yielded as to allow himself to be announced as a candidate for the County of Louth, without however withdrawing his claim to the seat which he had hitherto occupied. This being understood, he was re-elected for Milborne Port, and proceeded some days afterwards to Ireland to prepare for a contest, should such there be, in Louth. Mr. R. M. Bellew was now among his supporters; and the liberal party in the county being no longer disunited, his return along with Mr. Dawson was rendered secure. About the same time a communication was made to him by Mr. Crampton, then Solicitor-General, that the Irish Government were desirous that he should obtain a seat in the new Parliament; that should their anticipations regarding Louth be realised, and the seat

for Milborne Port vacated, Mr. Crampton would be named as his successor there.

The new Parliament was opened on the 21st June, and on the 8th July a new writ was moved for Milborne Port, in the room of Mr. Sheil, who had elected to sit for the county of Louth.

The opinions he had given in private respecting the duty of providing a suitable system of Poor Laws for Ireland, he did not shrink from enforcing in the House of Commons. A select committee had the year before examined many witnesses on the state of destitution in which a great portion of the peasantry and working classes were steeped, without any other mitigation of their misery than what was afforded by capricious almsgiving. Official men, both Whig and Tory, supported the Malthusian theory of allowing misery to burn itself out. O'Connell and his disciples advocated a repeal of the Union. Wise and practical men of all parties among the middle classes, and the pious and benevolent among the clergy of all persuasions, urged that while politicians were wrangling about remedies for the future, and economists were contending about the abstract definitions of wages and rent, it was a scandal and a sin that a people should be suffered to rot by thousands into a grave dug in the most fertile

soil of western Europe. Dr. Doyle gave valuable evidence before the committee in support of the Christian, as opposed to the scientific and red-tape theory; and to this Mr. Sadler alluded in an elaborate speech on the 29th August, which he concluded by moving a declaratory resolution "that it was expedient and necessary to constitute a legal provision for the poor of Ireland." Lord Althorp could not deny the prevalence of distress or the duty of Parliament to provide alleviating if not remedial measures; but he did not see how these were to be carried into operation; and as no detailed scheme had been expounded, he must move the previous question, and thus leave things as they were. Mr. Sheil followed. After pointing out the distinction between a rate in large towns where Mendicity Associations had been tried with but indifferent success, and in agricultural districts where for the most part no voluntary relief at all existed; he went on to discuss the question on more general grounds:—

"Even if spontaneous benevolence had partially succeeded, he should desire to put an end to a system by which charity was mulcted, while parsimonious opulence escaped from contribution. The tax which pity levied on its slender resources enabled insensibility to hug itself in ignominious consciousness of its privilege, and gave a base immunity to men without a heart. He would

he owned, disturb the sordid luxuries of men who in the midst of public scorn turned their self-applauding contemplation to their chests of gold. But the society to which he had referred had failed, and it would be in vain to argue the question upon a hypothesis of its success. If private benevolence could support the weight it were well; but when it sunk beneath it, it was but reasonable (if he might borrow an allusion from a source so sacred) to give it an auxiliary, and enable it to bear the burthen which it had no longer strength sufficient to sustain. Should the legislature refuse to extend to the Dublin vestries the right of making an assessment in aid of the Mendicity Association, it must close its gates on four thousand paupers, and pour whole shoals of beggary, with all its worst accompaniments of loathsomeness both moral and physical, into the public streets. The institution of a rate in the Irish metropolis would prevent this serious evil—it would equalize contribution—would be a resource to indigence and benevolence—it would be guarded from abuse by the vigilance of good and kindly men, and would be a precedent for adoption by its success; or if it should unhappily fail, it would dispose by the evidence of experiment, of the entire question, by furnishing an example which would not only deter from imitation, but put to these speculations for the improvement of Ireland a salutary end. With respect to the general question, it was to be lamented that the committee on the state of the poor of Ireland did not report on what seemed to be the essence and marrow of the matter which was referred to their consideration. It must be confessed however, that they had done important service by publishing so large a body of valuable testimony. The two witnesses most conspicuous were Dr. Chalmers and Dr. Doyle, who dissenting in opinion coincided in humanity, vied with each other in lofty faculty and in pure emotion—differed in dogma, but agreed in benevolence, and exhibited such a union of truly Christian attributes, that they should reconcile the two religions of which they are the ornaments, and induce Rome to forgive Geneva, and Geneva to pardon Rome. When men so distinguished

took views so opposite, it was difficult to arrive at a conclusion free from doubt. He thought however, that Dr. Doyle must be allowed to have as a witness this signal advantage—he spoke of what he had seen; the other of what he had heard. Dr. Chalmers talked of human nature; Dr. Doyle of its peculiar modification in his own country. Dr. Chalmers was afraid of congealing the pure sources of gratuitous benevolence. He did not know that in the heights of society in Ireland the moral temperature was already below the freezing-point, and that there was a crust of ice upon the fountain of sympathy which charity could not melt, but which the law perhaps might break. He owned that he thought it a paradox in others to maintain misery in order to keep kindliness in practice, and to cultivate the retired sensibility at the cost of so much woe. Arthur Young fifty years ago, and Malthus five years ago, observed, that 'the gentry in Ireland have no mercy for the poor.' The law that made slaves of one caste, and tyrants of the other, demoralized both: it sent the people to roll and wallow in the depths of poverty, while it petrified the feelings of the aristocracy, and gave to power an ossification of the heart. It might be said, 'Time will cure all this.' Ay; but when would the moral Aurora arise? A generation must be laid in the grave, and the field of Irish prosperity must be sought in the churchyards of Ireland." After noticing the aggravation of the evil of want of employment produced by absenteeism, and the meanness of those "who preferred being insignificant in London to being useful and respectable in Dublin; or those who in France or Italy vilified their country in all the artifices of accent with which they vainly endeavoured to disguise the original raciness of a genuine Irish intonation,"—he described the horrors of wholesale evictions of the peasantry. "Some lay down in ditches to die, others raised hovels for the purposes of casual mendicity on the brow of some hill in the public way; some retreated to excavations in bogs and hewed themselves out a habitation in a morass; but the greater part found their way into the obscure alleys and lanes of ruinous districts in large cities

—they swarmed in human clusters in garrets and in vaults: if you looked up, you saw famine glaring from a sashless window in the attic of some ruined deserted house; if you looked down, you beheld it in a cellar, seated upon its bed of short and pestilential straw. There was no exaggeration in this. The committee report that the ejected tenantry suffered affliction which it was not in the power of language to describe. But this was called a state of transition. Call it pestilence, famine, death, and men would tremble; but call it transition—envelop it in the technical vocabulary of fiscal science, and a directory of economists will speak of it with the tranquillity with which a French philosopher would have expatiated on the process of regeneration which his country was undergoing through the sanguinary celerity of the guillotine. But it was only justice to add that at last men's eyes and hearts were opening. It was admitted that something must be done to alleviate those dreadful sufferings; science had relented—political economy had been touched—algebra was giving way to pity—and theorists and speculators were no longer heard amidst the cries of a nation that stretched forth its hands for food."*

Writing the following day to Mr. Curran, he alludes to the success of this speech: "I last night made a decided hit in the House. I spoke in my old Association style, without fear; and it told exceedingly well." In the same communication he mentions the receipt of a very kind letter from Lord Anglesea. "I lament that the Government of so excellent a man should be involved in such difficulty. It was a great mistake to call a body of men together at Lord

* Debate, 29th August, 1831.

Althorp's; no man felt it a compliment; O'Connell thought himself in duty bound to attack the measure. He sent an account of his speech to Dublin. Had he been taken apart he would have seen the thing in a different view, but the Whigs know nothing about government outside the House."* Under the same date he mentions that he was then engaged in writing a review of Moore's "Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald," for the "Edinburgh." The article appeared in the number published in the September following.†

When Parliament re-assembled in February the struggle regarding Reform, it was understood, would be renewed. On the one all-absorbing question Ministers had a large majority in the Commons, but upon other questions they possessed a very doubtful ascendency over the minds of their followers. With all the respect paid to his personal character, and the equally sincere deference which is generally rendered in English politics to one who represents great families and great possessions, Lord Althorp often found it difficult to hold together the various sections who, upon Reform, acknowledged him to be their

* Letter dated from Grosvenor-place, 30th August, 1831.

† Vol. liv., p. 114.

indispensable chief. "I do not think," observes Mr. Sheil, in writing to a friend in Ireland, "this Government will last. On the Russian loan they received a dreadful shock. Last night Lord Althorp admitted that he had made an error in his financial computation of 350,000*l.*; he forgot that the beer duties expired in October, 1830. There was a burst of laughter. He also admitted that a new convention was necessary for the payment of the interest on the Russian-Dutch loan, though he has already paid it. It is evident that Ministers cannot retain the confidence of the country after the Reform Bill goes through." He notices a rumour that he was to succeed Mr. Crampton in the Irish Solicitor-Generalship, as being wholly unfounded, adding that he did not desire it: he "must make more way in the House first."*

In committee on the Reform Bill, Mr. Sheil moved that Petersfield instead of being allowed to return one member in future should be wholly disfranchised. He contrasted its population, property, and number of electors, with those of Amersham, which the House had already agreed should be included in schedule A.

* Extract from a letter to W. H. Curran, Esq., 7th February, 1832.

In the last-named borough the population was 2015, while in Petersfield it did not exceed 1443. In Amersham there were a hundred and one 10*l.* houses, and the rental was stated at 7000*l.*; in Petersfield there were but eighty-nine 10*l.* houses, and the rental only amounted to 2500*l.* How then could the right of the smaller, poorer and less populous place to return a member be vindicated, after the claim of the larger and wealthier borough had been disallowed? He wished to try the question on the plain ground of principle, and he would therefore state frankly, that if he succeeded in this instance he should proceed to apply the same rule to Wareham, Eye, Midhurst, and Woodstock. There would thus be at the disposal of the House five additional seats, some of which he thought as a matter of justice, ought to be conferred on large and populous places in Ireland which were now very inadequately represented. Lord Althorp did not affect to defend the retention of Petersfield upon general grounds, nor could he deny the seeming anomaly which had been pointed out; but on the score of expediency, it was obviously requisite that the bill should be framed in such a manner as not to preclude the hope of its passing the House of Lords. The motion was negatived without a division; but it

is not unworthy of remark, that the five towns above named are amongst those which, in 1854, it was proposed entirely to disfranchise.

On the proposition of Mr. Stanley, to consider in committee of the whole House a plan for the abolition of tithes in Ireland, and the substitution for them of a rent-charge upon real property, Mr. Brownlow objected that full information had not been given as to the general scheme of the Government before they were called upon to go into committee; and he moved an amendment, which would have had the effect of compelling Ministers to do so. It was supported by Mr. Sheil at considerable length. "Tithes are to be abolished—how? By providing for them a sepulchre from which they are to arise in immortal resuscitation." The amendment was lost by a large majority, and a bill was subsequently introduced, founded on the resolutions of Mr. Stanley, which encountered a good deal of opposition.

Many taunts having been thrown out in the course of these discussions against the Catholic members, on account of the oath prescribed on their admission to the House, Mr. Sheil thought it right to vindicate his own consistency, and to explain the

construction which, in common with many others, he put upon the terms of the obligation referred to. He declared that according to his interpretation of the oath, he would feel bound in conscience and in duty, if a proposition should be made to strip the Protestant Church of all its temporalities, to oppose such a proceeding; but he did not think that the oath prevented him from supporting, like any other member of Parliament, measures which went to reform that establishment, and to settle it on a more liberal and legitimate basis. Such was his reading of the oath; such he was sure would be the reading of it in the eyes of men of common sense; and he was equally certain that it never was the intention of the Legislature in imposing that obligation, to prevent Catholic members from acting like other independent members of Parliament.*

Another bill was introduced for the commutation of Irish tithes, on the same principle as the land tax in England, and it passed the second reading without opposition. On going into committee, Mr. Sheil moved that the preamble should recite that the first-fruits should be applicable in future to the maintenance and repair of churches, and to such other uses as Par-

* Debate, 6th April, 1832.

liament should hereafter deem fit. He desired to obtain a declaration from the Legislature favourable to the relief from the payment of church rates of those who did not belong to the Established Church. Mr. Stanley intimated his concurrence in the general proposition, though he could not assent to its adoption as moved; and on a division there appeared to be but eighteen in its favour, against seventy-nine. In the following session however, the principle was embodied in a bill which obtained the sanction of the Legislature.

The second reading of the Irish Reform Bill on the 26th May, was opposed by Sir Robert Peel and the whole strength of the Conservative party, not only upon the same grounds as those upon which they had resisted the English bill, but because any increase of popular influence in the representation of Ireland would tend to endanger the stability of the Irish Church. The most prominent defenders of the bill were Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Sheil. The former argued against the recognition of religious distinctions in the framing of organic laws, and prognosticated that the new county constituencies instead of being 52,000, would be only 25,000, which could not fail to be regarded as wholly incommensurate with the

wants and claims of the population. Mr. Sheil urged that if Reform were granted to England and denied to Ireland, the effect would be to raise the price of Irish boroughs. They would become doubly valuable. They alone would then be in the market; and the competition for them would be most animated. Dundalk would then be enhanced in value; happy Tralee would be inestimable. The question was not whether they would concede Irish Reform, but whether or not they should permit the Irish boroughs to send in nominees to that House, to mingle with the genuine representatives of the people, and to exercise for all practical purposes the same privileges as would be exercised by members for places in England. It was one advantage derived from the Union, that England could not inflict wrong upon them without injury to herself. The two nations were united by the Siamese knot, and so long as it remained uncut, together they must thrive and together they must die. That the whole of the boroughs would be thrown into the hands of the Roman Catholic democracy by the proposed bill was an assertion without a shadow of proof; and he challenged those who made the assertion to confirm it. On this head the grossest exag-

geration had been indulged in.* He proceeded to urge that the bill for Ireland should be måde identical with that for England, as the surest way of healing national distrust and animosity.

His advice, and that of all who thought and felt as he did on the momentous question, was treated however with disregard. The Irish Reform Bill was retained in the abortive shape in which it had been conceived. The votes of the Irish liberals were no longer needed to secure the English bill, and their remonstrances as to the inadequacy of the measure doled out to their country by Mr. Stanley and his colleagues, were treated with contempt. On going into committee Mr. George Lamb, who then sat for Dungarvan, called attention to the fact, that by the provisions of the bill the 5*l.* household franchise would be abolished in boroughs in Ireland, whereby the constituency of Dungarvan would be reduced from 860 to 200 voters. Mr. Sheil asked "whether the policy of the English Reform Bill was not, to have a constituency of at least three hundred in each borough? Why in the name of justice and common sense should not the same principle be extended to Ireland? In England the boroughs were to be

* Hansard, 1832; vol. xiii., p. 160.

thrown open; in Ireland hot-beds of corruption were to be preserved. He implored the House to listen to the complaints of the Irish people, in whose heart it would be very easy to plant a thorn, but it would not be so easy to pluck it out."*

On going into committee, Mr. O'Connell moved an instruction that the 40*s.* franchise which had been abrogated in Ireland in 1829, should be restored. It was shown by Mr. N. P. Leader that 190,000 persons had been thus divested of the right of voting; and it was urged by Mr. Sheil that if there was any sincerity in the desire professed, to assimilate the privileges of the two nations, the opportunity ought to be taken for restoring on the other side of the Channel what had always existed on this. The amendment, however, was lost by 122 against 73.

Of five new members given to Ireland, one was to be added to the University of Dublin. Avowedly this provision was intended as one for strengthening the defences of the church. It was opposed by many English as well as Irish members; and an amendment was moved by Sir Robert Heron, that the new seat should be conferred upon the county of Cork, the city

* Hansard, 1832; vol. xiii., p. 569.

of Londonderry, or the city of Kilkenny. This was supported by Mr. O'Connell and several others. Mr. Sheil reminded the House that while of eight new members for Scotland, not one had been given to her universities; out of five additional representatives for Ireland one was to be conferred on Trinity College. There were 2000 students on the books of the University of Edinburgh; while there were but 1500 on those of Dublin University. The first was without a member, and the second requires two. "Did the interests of literature or of the country require that Dublin College should transmit to Parliament a second edition, or rather a duplicate, of the learned gentleman (Mr. Lefroy) by whom the feelings of his constituents were represented with so indisputable a fidelity? The constituency was to consist of three classes, the fellows, the scholars, and the ex-scholars. What benefit to science could be obtained by enabling any one of these to return two members to Parliament? The senior fellows had no pupils; their principal duty was to receive about 2000*l.* a-year from the funds of the College. But it was to be presumed, although the University press did not corroborate the suggestion, that in return they were engaged in accumulating large masses of

erudition, enriching themselves with literary treasure, and in opening new veins of intellectual wealth in their moral, mental, and physical investigations. Their fortunate repose, so auspicious to their noble and disinterested pursuits, ought not to be distracted by a multifarious canvass; and it was not desirable that they should be molested by two candidates for Parliament whispering bishoprics in their ears. The junior fellows earn their livelihood by their pupils, and some of them earned their pupils by their politics."* The amendment, however, was lost upon a division, by 147 to 97. Another amendment was moved by Mr. Sheil, having for its object the omission of the clause requiring payment of rates in cities and boroughs, which he argued would prove a fertile source of corruption and fraud; but like the rest, this also was rejected.

When the tidings reached England of the suppression of the Polish insurrection, and the cruelties perpetrated in cold blood by the conqueror, deep and bitter, though unavailing regret was felt by the people at large that nothing had been done while yet there was time, by either England or France, to save a gallant nation from extinction. Mr. Cutlar

* Hansard, 1832; vol. xiii., p. 599.

Ferguson brought forward the subject on the 28th June, with a view of showing that by treaties to which Great Britain was a guaranteeing party, we were justified in interposing; Lord Sandon, Lord Morpeth, and others supported the motion, which was one for the production of papers. Mr. O'Connell having applied to the Emperor Nicholas the epithet of a "miscreant conqueror," Sir Robert Inglis objected to such language. Mr. Hume would have preferred the term "monster;" while Sir Robert Peel "deprecated the use of such terms in reference to a sovereign with whom the country was in alliance: he must suspend his judgment respecting his conduct until he was quite certain the allegations were true." Mr. Sheil "would not call the Czar a miscreant, because, when he saw a man delegating power to his brother—[into whom the spirit of Nero must have transmigrated, if there was a metempsychosis among despots,]—to tread the heart of Poland out; when he saw him betraying a nation of heroes into submission, and then transporting them to Siberia, degrading and enslaving women, sparing neither age nor sex, and thrusting the hand of a Herod-like infanticide into the cradle of Polish childhood; when he saw him acting thus, and having himself nothing to add to

the damnation, he would not call him 'miscreant,' because the word was too poor and incommensurate with his depravity, but he would exclaim,—Oh! thou art worse than words can give thee out!"* But the Czar was then "our august ally; and the Poles, whom justice and policy alike called on England to succour and sustain, were left to their fate.

More than three years had now elapsed, and the legislative promise made by the Relief Bill remained unfulfilled. The Catholic constituencies of Ireland had returned to Parliament some twenty gentlemen professing the Catholic faith, and a few subordinate offices in the land had been conferred on members of that persuasion; but in the main the hopes and expectations of civil equality which Emancipation had naturally created, continued to be altogether unrealized. The whole of the administrative functions of Government were still reserved for Protestant hands. Not only every political office, but every seat on the judicial bench, was still monopolized as completely by members of the Established Church as they had been in the days of statutable exclusion. In a confidential letter, of a somewhat later date, Lord Wellesley forcibly called the attention of the Cabinet

* Hansard, 1832; vol. xiii., p. 1146.

to the fact, "that the Roman Catholics of Ireland had never yet been admitted to the full benefit of the laws passed for their relief. Entitled by law to admission into almost any office in the State, they had been, and were still, practically excluded from almost every branch of the executive administration of the Government. The few admitted into the station of assistant-barristers or into the police, only served to mark the right to admission, without any approach to an equitable distribution of official benefits. It was impossible to suppose that a whole nation could repose confidence or act cordially with a Government, when so large a portion of the people were practically excluded from all share in the higher offices of the State, while their right to admission was established by law."*

Feelings of bitter disappointment were the natural fruit of injustice so systematic and so unwise. In the struggle for Reform the popular party in Ireland had not been wanting; yet they found themselves denied a participation in many of the benefits which that measure conferred upon the people of Great Britain: and they could not but believe, that notwithstanding all the professions of an impartial and

* Memoirs of the Marquis Wellesley, vol. iii., p. 406.

comprehensive policy made in Parliament, a settled purpose was still tacitly entertained of perpetuating a system of religious disabilities. A spirit of alienation from England perceptibly began to spread amongst those classes which had hitherto stood aloof from the agitation for Repeal; and many who had previously deemed O'Connell's advocacy of such a measure impolitic and chimerical, were gradually led to regard it in a very different point of view, and to believe that without at least the menace of some such alternative it was vain to expect any substantial alteration of the mode in which Ireland was governed. In sentiments like these Mr. Sheil found himself at length compelled to sympathize. He had been among the first to offer an unconditional and confiding support to the Government. He had sacrificed a popularity second only to that of O'Connell, by refusing to join with him in the resumption of agitation after the passing of the Relief Bill. He had steadfastly clung to the belief that Ministers could not long continue to be blinded as to the course which it was their constitutional duty to pursue, by the personal resentments of Mr. Stanley, or of those who contributed with him to maintain intolerant and illiberal views. But experience had falsified these anticipations. The taunts and re-

proaches of having deserted the cause of country and of creed, which he had previously borne with equanimity because he felt them to be unjust, assumed a very different significance when he could no longer persuade even himself that there was any definite prospect of seeing that sectarian equality established for which he so long had striven. With the literal realization of the project propounded by O'Connell, for the dissolution of the Union and the reconstitution of a separate Parliament in Ireland, he gave himself perhaps no very practical concern. But he felt that the condition of things then subsisting was indefensible, and that some essential and permanent change must be forced upon the consideration of the Imperial Government and Legislature, if peace or prosperity was ever to be looked for in Ireland. O'Connell himself had frequently avowed "that he had raised the cry for Repeal as a means to an end," and the day was not far distant when he declared himself ready to try whether the end might not be attained otherwise than by such means. With Mr. Sheil, as with many others at the time, "Repeal" was in point of fact, but short-hand for just and equal government in Ireland. With these sentiments he at length resolved to join the Repeal Association, and on the

29th November he made a short but striking speech as a member of that body. His appearance was the signal for an outburst of welcome from those who for years had been accustomed to listen to his soul-stirring harangues, and the first few words that fell from him were uttered in a tone of mingled threat and triumph that were not soon forgotten :—

"The place in which I stand is encompassed with recollections. It was from hence that year after year, we sent forth those appeals to the pride, to the nationality, to the just sense, to the reason of the Irish people, by which Emancipation—the word has become familiar, though it never can be vulgar, but its etymology is pregnant with noble thoughts—was accomplished. I took some part in those great proceedings (loud cheers). I felt profoundly, and I spoke with ardour, and turning my emotions into words, I communicated to others the sentiments by which I was ardently affected. My share in that vast achievement was inconsiderable, but it was not destitute of honour. I was appreciated by my fellow-bondsmen beyond my deserts. From almost every district in this great country—for this country has become great—I received testimonials of national approbation (hear). It is impossible for me on entering this spot not to recal to my recollection some scenes of that noble drama in which I enacted a part not altogether inferior; and now that I enter this stage again, I must be forgiven if I indulge in what would be egotism if others did not feel that they participated in these recollections. You will not blame me—I am sure you will not—if, while I survey these localities which are consecrated to the freedom of Ireland, I venture to pour out my thoughts before you, and to say that it is not without some pride that I behold a field in which a victory for Ireland—which was only the precursor of another—was obtained. We stand on the same ground; the same flags

are unfurled, and as we advance to the encounter our trust in our success is confirmed by the remembrance of our former triumph. 'It is the sun of Austerlitz,' exclaimed Napoleon, when he saw the glorious luminary on the plains of Jena. Let us remember in order that we may hope. I have referred to my recollections for no other purpose than to disclose my anticipations. Emancipation was carried here, and here, if the same policy be pursued with respect to Ireland, shall as great a good be accomplished. (Reiterated cheers.) To what a magnitude has Repeal dilated—to what a vast stature has this question arisen! A few months have been sufficient for its rapid and gigantic growth. O'Connell on one side of the cradle and Stanley on the other, have rocked this offspring of the wrongs of Ireland, and cradled it into strength; the one by appealing to the instincts of the nation, the other by offering outrage to its pride; the one by applying all the useful stimulants which could be used with its generous feelings, the other by a series of the most exasperating offences that could have been designed,—they have, without any community of purpose, but by impulses in an opposite direction, excited a feeling of which, at the approaching elections, a most formidable demonstration will be afforded."

He then reviewed the events of the session, dividing the acts of the Grey administration towards Ireland into two categories—"Affronts and Wrongs." Warnings and remonstrances had been alike unavailing. Packed committees of inquiry at Westminster, and packed juries to try political offences at Clonmel, had borne their natural fruit in disappointment and disgust.

"Look to the state of Ireland. See what has befallen. A call irresistible to those who are dependent on the people has

been made. We are all sucked into the vast vortex. The Repeal pledge is demanded in every borough and county. So far from being surprised that this should be the case, I should be astonished that it were otherwise. For what a case have the Repealers to make! Is it necessary that I should evoke the shade of Grattan from those cloisters at Westminster, where he ought never to have been entombed? The green cairn in the hills of his own country would have afforded a better monument." [He then cited the well known denunciations of the Union by Plunket and Lord Grey in 1799.] "These statesmen now said their opinions had subsequently changed, because they had learned to look for wise and beneficial legislation for Ireland from a united Parliament. But where were the proofs of the justice of these expectations? Twenty-nine years had been spent in exacting even an acknowledgment of the chief promise of the Union; and now that in name it had been extorted, the practical fulfilment was still withheld. How is a reformed Parliament to remedy these evils? Not surely by persevering in the same fatal policy, which must inevitably be the case unless the House of Commons shall be scared by the fear of Repeal into the adoption of a juster mode of dealing towards Ireland. It is befitting that we should in the reformed Parliament take a high and imperious attitude, and to press Repeal, if with no other purpose than with a view to its avoidance, by extending justice to our country. Let there be but forty Irishmen combined in this great measure, who shall act in a combination representing the confederacy of the Irish people, and salutary results will speedily accrue. They can arbitrate between rival parties; and, let politicians talk with as much magniloquence of phrase and as much vaunt as they like of their attachment to party honour, and their devotion to public principle—still such is the passion for power and office, that in emergencies, the Government will accommodate themselves to the exigency of the occasion: they will send for the Irish members and inquire—'Pray, gentlemen, what do you wish should be done for your country?' This question is to be em-

ployed as an instrument to insure justice. The hope of putting it down is idle: it has effected a lodgment in the feelings of the nation from which it cannot be driven."

Having made up his mind to offer himself as a candidate for the county of Tipperary instead of Louth, but a few weeks before the dissolution, he was obliged to complete an arduous canvass in an unusually short space of time. A gentleman well acquainted with the politics of the county assured him from the outset that he need not anticipate any opposition, and endeavoured to dissuade him from bringing any considerable number of voters to the county town on the first day. By others a different advice however was given; and at considerable cost and inconvenience great numbers of the freeholders were brought from remote places to Clonmel, where alone, under the provisions of the Irish Reform Act, their suffrages could be legally recorded. On the day of nomination no Conservative candidate appeared, and after the return had been signed and the new member had received many congratulations, he took the gentleman aside to whom reference has been made and asked him to walk with him along the banks of the river on which the town is situated, where he seemed glad to escape in the quiet and fresh-

ness of the air from the din and excitement in which he had been recently engaged. As soon as they were quite alone he stopped short, and looking at his companion said with an inquisitive tone—"Now tell me candidly, did you know so long beforehand that the Tories were not in earnest in saying they would oppose me?" Some general reasons were given in reply which did not seem to satisfy him, and he repeated more than once his regret at not having taken advice which would have saved him a considerable outlay.

To Mr. Staunton, a few days afterwards, he adverted to the same subject. "I am member for Tipperary, but the cost has been immense. I fed 1000 voters in Clonmel. There has been one advantage from it: I made such a demonstration of strength as will appal the enemy for the future."

The results of the general election in Ireland were sufficiently striking. In the three southern provinces but few Conservatives were returned, while no less than 35 were pledged to vote for the Repeal of the Union. "What immense Parliamentary influence O'Connell will command," was the expression of Mr. Sheil when reviewing these events, and forecasting their possible consequences. "I do not see how the

Government will get on with Irish business. If the Irish be but true to themselves they will be irresistible. But I dread division and jealousy and small cabal among us, when we set our feet on British soil."

A trait of his simplicity and of his readiness to be amused and interested with trivial matters is mentioned by a friend who chanced to meet him in Regent-street, and to whom he showed a handkerchief he had just purchased, on which was stamped a map of Europe. He said he had bought it for a shilling, adding with a laugh, "Is not the schoolmaster abroad? This I have bought for my son to teach him geography. By the way, do you know any good book of geography for children?" On being told that the best was the excellent little volume by Mr. Croker, he asked if the author was the ex-Secretary of the Admiralty, and being told that he was, he insisted on going straight to Murray's, where he bought a copy of the book, and carried it home with him, highly pleased with his acquisition.

The first Reform Parliament was opened on the 5th of February, in a speech from the Throne, which indicated the intention of Ministers to apply to the Legislature for extraordinary powers for the repression of disturbances in Ireland. This called forth the vehe-

ment denunciation of O'Connell, who ascribed to the Government a design of suppressing the discussion of political grievances under the pretence of preserving public tranquillity. The royal speech declared an unalterable determination to maintain intact the Legislative Union; and those who sought for its repeal believed that the new coercive statute was aimed as much against them as against the perpetrators of agrarian crime. The attack of Mr. O'Connell upon the Government was answered by Mr. Macaulay in a speech mainly devoted to the question of the Union. His arguments and illustrations were directed to show the practical incompatibility of two co-ordinate Legislatures under the same crown, and with the same Imperial executive. If the two countries could not, after a fair trial, be governed as one in a spirit of justice and of freedom, then would arise a fair cause for separation; but between separation and incorporate union he saw no middle term.

Mr. Sheil rose to reply. He declined to enter into the controversy as one of theory or speculation. The cry for Repeal had arisen from a sense of practical injustice; and if Parliament were not prepared to remedy the evils complained of, they would fail in their attempt to extinguish the cry. The question was

not whether a perfect and real union might not exist, but whether, under the name of incorporation, inequality the most glaring, and inferiority the most insulting, had not been imposed? The three countries were said to form one kingdom, yet there was not one Irishman permitted to hold any office of political trust in the Irish executive. All creeds were declared to be equal in the eye of the law; but Emancipation was still a dead letter as far as Government was concerned. There was not a Catholic on the judicial bench; out of twenty-six stipendiary magistrates recently made, not one was a Catholic; and when offenders were to be tried for infractions of the law regarding tithes, juries were packed as unscrupulously upon sectarian principles as they had ever been in the palmiest days of ascendency. Until the Union could be maintained without resort to such a system of administration as this, it was mere infatuation to expect that it would be regarded with contentment or respect by the people of Ireland; and he believed that until, in addition to these grievances, the Church question was set at rest, no arguments from history or philosophical inductious would avail aught towards appeasing the cry for Repeal. That cry had been foretold three-and-thirty years before by no less a

personage than the then Prime Minister. Lord Grey and many of the leading Whigs of 1799, had strongly opposed the measure of the Union, predicting that it would only produce distrust, suspicion, and resentment, if carried by corruption and terror; and that the people of Ireland would only wait for an opportunity of recovering their rights, which they would say had been taken from them by means the most unjustifiable.

Mr. Grant replied to these citations by asking whether a measure might not consistently be defended upon the ground that experience had proved its utility, by one who thirty years before had opposed its adoption from sincere apprehensions regarding its working, or equally sincere disapproval of the means by which it was brought about? There were in fact many distinguished persons in Ireland at the time to whom the interrogatory of Mr. Grant applied; Lord Plunket, Chief Justice Bushe, Mr. Saurin, Mr. Goold, and Mr. Peter Burrowes, had all been earnest and eloquent opponents of the Act of 1800, but they were all understood to be adverse to the attempt to obtain its revocation. The last-named of these gifted persons, when pressed somewhat reproachfully in private with the recollection of his early zeal for a

separate Legislature in Ireland, exclaimed, "Yes, it is quite true that I was against the marriage, but that is no reason why I should, after thirty years, be in favour of a divorce."

The celebrated bill for suppression of disturbances in Ireland, was on the 15th February introduced in the Upper House by Lord Grey, who described the fearful prevalence of agrarian outrages, and ascribed the disregard of law to the exciting language used by O'Connell and others engaged in the Repeal agitation. The bill authorized the Lord-Lieutenant to proclaim any county or district in a state of insurrection, and the trial of all persons charged with offences therein, to be held and punished by courts-martial. It likewise contained provisions whereby any society or assemblage might be forbidden to meet by proclamation of the Viceroy, and rendered all persons who disregarded the same punishable by fine and imprisonment. No meeting to petition Parliament for the redress of any grievance in Church or State, was to be held without ten days' previous notice having been laid before the Lord-Lieutenant, and without the grant of his permission. All persons living in a proclaimed district were prohibited from being out of their houses between sunset and sunrise the following morning.

The bill met with no opposition in the Lords; and on the 27th February, it was proposed by Lord Althorp that it should be read a first time in the Commons.

The scene was a memorable one. After the House had been called over, the Chancellor of the Exchequer rose to state the reasons which had induced the Government to propose such a measure. "It was," observed one of those who looked most leniently on his faults, and who himself has since enjoyed singular advantages of observation and experience, in forming a judgment of the effect produced in the House of Commons on occasions of difficulty and importance, "It was just the sort of task which in every way was unsuited to him. The House expected a statement of broad and general views justifying the extraordinary powers demanded, but there was nothing of the sort. He took out of a box a number of papers containing lists of so many murders and so many robberies of arms, and so many cases of breaking into dwellings by men with their faces blacked, just as you would in a prison report. All this produced little or no effect; and when he sat down after detailing the provisions of the bill, it was impossible not to perceive that its supporters were conscious that no adequate case had been made out in the estimation of a large

portion of those who heard him. But when, at the close of the debate Stanley proceeded to deal with the same materials and to use the same facts, the effect produced by his vigour of style, clearness of arrangement, and vehemence of invective, was quite extraordinary; and had he proposed when he sat down a vote of denunciation of any kind against O'Connell, it would probably have been carried by nine-tenths of those present." It was perhaps the most complete and sudden re-animation of a whole party with his own spirit by one man, not recognised or claiming to be its leader, that has been witnessed in our time.

Mr. Grote, Sir E. Lytton (Bulwer), Mr. Romilly, and other English members, spoke strongly against the unconstitutional provisions by which trial by jury and the right of meeting to petition, were to be taken away. The first reading was however carried after six nights' debate by 466 to 89.

Upon the second reading, Mr. Charles Buller, Mr. Hawkins, and others, opposed its further progress; a majority, however, of 363 to 84 decided in its favour. Every clause was contested in committee, but without any other result than to inflame still further the exasperation which the introduction of the measure had caused.

On the 29th March, the Bill was read a third time by 345 to 86. On the 11th April, the Society of Irish Volunteers was suppressed by proclamation issued under the new Act.

A motion to abolish military flogging having been made by Mr. Hume, it was supported by Mr. Sheil, who did not think the opinion expressed in support of the practice by officers of the army ought to govern the judgment of the House. He should not feel bound by the opinion of the beneficed clergyman on the question of reform in the church, or by that of a West India planter regarding negro slavery, or by that of a lawyer respecting reform of the abuses of the law. He thought it a most dreadful and demoralizing system and he should unhesitatingly vote for its entire abolition.

On Mr. Sadler's motion, pledging the House to adopt some system of Poor Laws for Ireland, Mr. Sheil pointed out that the whole value of the measure would consist in its nature and scope. It was essentially one which would either be useful or injurious according as it was adapted to the wants and habits of the people it was intended to relieve. Mr. Sadler had not ventured to describe what he would do, or by what instrumentality the object was to be effected.

A bill reducing the number of bishops in Ireland from twenty-two to twelve, providing for the conversion of church lands into perpetuities by the tenants who held leases, establishing an Ecclesiastical Commission for the regulation of church property, and abolishing church cess, was brought in and read a first time. The manner in which the last of these objects was to be effected was that proposed by Mr. Sheil in the previous session. By the 147th clause the surplus, if any, which should remain in the hands of the commission after duly providing for the spiritual wants of the Protestant population, was made applicable to general purposes of charity and education. This was denounced by the Conservative Opposition, as involving the principle of the alienability by Parliament of the property of the church, and Mr. Stanley, on the 21st June, moved in committee that the clause should be omitted. Bitter reproaches were directed against Ministers both by English and Irish members, for having held out this principle as a lure for support until the last moment and then withdrawing it to conciliate their party opponents. The omission however was carried by 280 to 148.

On the third reading, Mr. Sheil again raised the question, destined ere long to prove the great shib-

boleth of party conflict, by proposing to insert words tantamount in effect to the appropriation clause as a recital in the preamble. His speech on this occasion is well deserving of notice, as a proof of the facility with which he could at will lay aside the piquancy and picturesqueness of language which were supposed to form essential features in his style, and to adapt himself to the less imaginative and more obviously argumentative manner which has so long been traditional in the House of Commons. There is not perhaps a single sentence or even a paragraph in this masterly speech which, severed from the context, would give any striking notion of the cogency and weight of the reasoning employed. As well might a few broken bricks be offered as a sample of the strength or solidity of a wall, as any brief or fragmentary quotations from a concatenation of facts and arguments like that in question. This it must be owned, is in the main characteristic of the greater number of great speeches that have been made in Parliament during the present century; and it is peculiarly true as regards those of Mr. Pitt, Lord Grenville, Lord Wellesley, Sir Robert Peel, and Earl Grey. In supporting his amendment, he traced back to its first avowal in 1824 the fundamental differ-

ence of principle regarding church property which existed between those who then sat together in the same administration. On a motion of Mr. Hume's in that year, Mr. Brougham, Lord Althorp, Lord John Russell, and Mr. E. Ellice had concurred in sanctioning the principle, that Parliament had a right to inquire whether the revenues of the Establishment in Ireland were not excessive for the purposes to which they were devoted; while Mr. Stanley had won the cheers of the Tories and Conservative Whigs by his eloquent defence of the indefeasible rights of the church to retain all her possessions. He likewise referred to the opinion of Mr. Brougham in 1826, that the income of the clergy could no more be considered identical with private property than the pay of the army. After seven years, the early instincts of Ecclesiastical Conservatism had again developed themselves in the Secretary for the Colonies; but would his colleagues whom he had beguiled or driven into the adoption of the late unparalleled measure of coercion, consent to abrogate a principle they had so long ago and so lately advocated for the sake of propitiating a hostile majority in the House of Peers? The motion was negatived by 177 to 86; but the first step was taken towards

creating the memorable schism in the Whig party which occurred in the following year.

Notwithstanding the alteration thus made, it seemed doubtful at first whether the Lords would give their assent to the bill. In a letter to a friend, written on the 13th of July, Mr. Sheil expresses the prevalent conviction that there would be a majority against it on the second reading, in which case Ministers, it was thought, would resign; and he adds his belief that if the Tories were called upon to take the Government they would in a few weeks evince no little pliancy in re-fitting their policy to suit existing circumstances. After a debate, however, of three nights their Lordships, on the 19th of July, under the advice of the Duke of Wellington, decided by a majority of 157 to 98, in favour of the measure.

The case of Captain Atcheson, who had been dismissed from the army for refusing to order a salute to be fired in honour of the Host, was on the 17th of July brought under the notice of the House. Both Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Sheil supported the prayer of his petition to be restored to his former rank. The latter urged that "the Catholic soldier was exempted from the necessity of attending Protestant worship;

where then was the Roman Catholic that would not extend to others that privilege on which he set so high an appreciation? It was notorious to every man who had ever read the history of the early persecutions, that the Christians underwent martyrdom, not on account of the profession of particular tenets, but because they would not assist in the rites employed in the Roman temples in connexion with the religion of the State. The martyrology of the early Church was pregnant with these illustrious examples. The honour paid to the Host touches the very point on which Catholics and Protestants differ; and Captain Atcheson was justified in feeling that an implied recognition of the Eucharist was exacted from him. Instead of making allowance for conscientious scruples, this unfortunate gentleman was eight months afterwards, dismissed the service. This ought not to have been; and the House was bound to procure him redress."*

On supporting the motion of Mr. Tennyson D'Eyncourt, for leave to bring in a bill to limit the duration of Parliament to three years, Mr. Sheil taunted Ministers with having so soon forgotten the opinions they had professed so recently regarding the

* Hansard, 1833; vol. xix., p. 787.

constitutional propriety of taking the sense of the country, even during periods of party excitement. Lord J. Russell, when bringing in the Reform Bill, had declared that he left the duration of Parliament an open question. The Reform Bill was in some sort founded in theory; but to re-enact the triennial bill would simply be to go back to the oldest and best precedents of our history. The power of the House of Commons had indeed been much augmented by the Reform Act, but that was a reason why it ought not to be suffered to be too long-lived. The discretion vested in the national trustees had indeed been greatly increased; then it was all the more reasonable that the *cestui que trust* should more frequently have the opportunity of calling their trustees to account, and of changing them if they thought fit to do so.

The success which, during this session, had attended many of his efforts, and the facility he found in adapting himself more and more to the customary tone of debate, led him to think seriously of relinquishing finally all ideas of professional advancement. Law was at best for him an uncongenial pursuit; and its secondary rewards laboriously earned, contrasted ill with those which Parliamentary dis-

tinction held forth as easier of attainment, though more precarious and uncertain. While in Ireland during the autumn, he asked the advice of Mr. Perrin as to whether he should continue to seek for business at the Irish bar, or abandoning it altogether, confine his attention to political studies and avocations? His friend hesitated about giving an opinion on a subject of so much personal importance; but inclined to recommend an adherence to the profession, in certain branches of which he considered Mr. Sheil highly qualified to excel. At *Nisi Prius* for example, he would be tolerably sure of being frequently engaged; and he might fairly expect in due time to attain eminence and emolument. In reply to these suggestions, however, Mr. Sheil urged with truth the difficulties that encompassed any man who did not continuously devote his attention to the technical details of pleading and of practice; and after placing the matter in various points of view he summed up all by saying—"How could I ever be safe, after I had sat up all night at a case, that when I came into court in the morning our friend Tom Smith with his watch-maker's eye, would not be ready to point out some flaw in it?"

Notwithstanding such apprehensions he still con-

tinued at intervals to make his appearance in court, influenced rather by a sort of irresolution respecting the formal abandonment of his profession, than from any desire to affect having business. His visits, however, grew less and less frequent, and after a year or two he wholly laid aside the gown.

CHAPTER XVI.

1834.

Who is the traitor?—Lord Althorp's statement—Mr. C. Buller and Mr. Fonblanque—Committee of Privileges—Report—Debate on acquittal—Russia and Turkey—Irish Church question—Secession of Lord Stanley and his friends—Lord Melbourne Premier—Lord Duncannon—Dismissal of the Whigs—Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet—Dissolution of Parliament.

We now approach the most painful, and as regards his personal character, the most important trial which during a long and varied public life, he was destined to undergo. Great irritation had been caused by the resistance offered in Parliament to the Coercion Bill, and during the autumn many proofs were afforded on both sides of the Channel, that the feelings of exasperation thus excited were not likely soon to pass away. Amongst other topics of mutual recrimination was that which regarded the smallness

of the minority by whom the measure had been opposed. By the advocates of Repeal, the circumstance was dwelt on as a conclusive proof of the indisposition of the Imperial Parliament to legislate for Ireland in accordance with the wishes of her people. By the supporters of the Ministry it was bitterly retorted, that many English members had been swayed in the votes they had given by the conviction that not a few of the Irish representatives who had loudly inveighed against the Bill, were at heart desirous of its becoming law. From week to week these accusations of tyranny on the one side, and treachery on the other, were broadly but vaguely interchanged. At length the latter imputation assumed a more precise and definite form. In an address to his constituents at Hull, on the 22nd of October, Mr. Mathew Devonport Hill was reported to have declared "that he happened to know that an Irish member, who spoke with great violence and voted against every clause of that Bill, went to Ministers and said 'Don't bate one single atom of that Bill, or it will be impossible for any man to live in Ireland.'"

Public attention was particularly drawn to the allegations herein made by an article which appeared in the *Examiner* of the 10th of November following,

in which the necessity was pointed out of having the matter fully inquired into. More than one of the members to whom, as a class, the charge of Mr. Hill seemed to refer, publicly disclaimed its applicability to themselves; and Mr. O'Connell pronounced the story to be a mere fabrication. Every newspaper in the kingdom now re-echoed the cry of—"Who is the traitor?" Mr. Hill publicly announced that, to any gentleman who applied to him, he would distinctly state whether he was the individual alluded to or not. Several members addressed him accordingly, and were all answered in the negative. The greater number, however, made no such application; and thus the matter remained in as much obscurity as before.

Parliament met on the 4th of February, and on the following day, on bringing up the report on the Address, Mr. O'Connell took occasion to bring the subject under the notice of the House. He cited the expressions attributed to the honourable and learned member for Hull, declared his disbelief of the charge which they contained; but in justice to himself and his friends, he called upon the Ministerial leader to say first, whether he or any other member of the Cabinet had ever stated that an Irish member had acted in the manner described; and secondly, whether

any Irish member ever went to the noble Lord or any other Minister, and made the statement imputed to him? Lord Althorp said that "to the first of the questions he could answer positively for himself, and to the best of his belief for his colleagues, that no such assertion as had been referred to had ever been made; with respect to the second question, he was prepared to say that, as far as he was aware, no Irish member who voted and spoke against the Coercion Bill, had made any such statement to a Cabinet Minister." (The noble Lord placed a strong emphasis on the word *Cabinet*, which was remarked by the House, and elicited loud cries of "hear.") "His position was, he felt, peculiar, but he thought he should not act a manly part if he were to answer the question short. He had said that to his knowledge no Irish member who voted for the Coercion Bill had made the statement in question to a Cabinet Minister, but he should not act a manly part if he did not declare that he had good reason to believe that some Irish members (certainly more than one), who voted and spoke with considerable violence against the Bill, did in private conversation use very different language."

A scene of great excitement here ensued: Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Sheil both called upon the noble

Lord to name the persons he had alluded to. This he said he was ready to do if called on by members individually. Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Finn successively demanded if the imputation included them, and upon being answered that it did not, Mr. Sheil inquired whether he was one of those who were accused? Lord Althorp replied "the honourable gentleman is one." The sensation which followed this announcement may be readily conceived.

After a momentary pause, Mr. Sheil rose, and placing his arms across his breast, said with a slow and firm voice, "Having heard the statement which the noble Lord has just made to the House, I beg on the other hand to declare in the face of my country, and if I may do so without irreverence, in the presence of God, that if any individual has said to the noble Lord or to others, that I gave any approbation of the Coercion Bill in private, he has belied me by a gross and scandalous calumny; but as the noble Lord has put the statement on his own responsibility, I shall say no more." A long and desultory discussion ensued, in the course of which the Speaker was called upon to interpose, in the name and with the authority of the House, to prevent any hostile proceedings taking place between Lord Althorp and

Mr. Sheil, in consequence of what had occurred; and as neither when called upon would give any assurance sufficient to satisfy such an apprehension, both were committed to the custody of the Sergeant-at-Arms. After a short time, Mr. Stanley announced that he was authorized by his noble colleague to say that he submitted to the determination of the House, and that he pledged himself neither to send nor accept any hostile message. On the part of Mr. Sheil, Mr. Hume made a similar statement, and thus ended the strange and memorable scene.

It was clear, however, that the matter had gone too far to rest there. From the language of the Chancellor of the Exchequer, it was doubtful how many of the members of the House were involved in the imputation; and one had been distinctly named. After some consultation, it was resolved by the Irish members that a committee of privileges should be moved for, with a view to the thorough investigation of the affair in all its bearings; and Mr. O'Connell undertook to bring forward this motion on the 10th of February.

While the accusation hung over him, the sufferings of Mr. Sheil were intense. His temperament, at all times too susceptible to the impressions of the hour, sunk

under the imputation of dishonour thus publicly cast upon him; while his imagination conjured up with fearful vividness the whole train of consequences that must ensue from any partial failure of disproof or any qualification in the tone or tenour of the verdict of his judges. He had himself demanded investigation; he had selected the tribunal by whose sentence he would be content to abide. However high his confidence in his own rectitude, and in the public character of the men by whom that tribunal might be constituted, it was impossible for one so sensitive and so ambitious not to shudder at the thought, that between conflicting testimonies they might waver; and that in their wavering he must irretrievably be lost. Let those who have never been exposed to the affliction of an unjust charge, or to the trial of being day after day held up to the suspicion of the world, persuade themselves if they please, that in such a position their equanimity would not be disturbed. It must be a shallow soil in which, under such circumstances, honourable pain and manly grief would not rapidly take root and grow, like the gourd in the night, to overshadowing maturity. Mean pursuits and habits of thought may make men callous to ridicule or condemnation, as great advantages of social or political

station may sometimes render them insolently regardless of opinion; but the bitterness of the thoughts that crowded upon Sheil's passionate and not wholly unfeminine mind, was alleviated neither by the belief that in any case powerful partisans or connexions would be found to sustain him, nor by the reflections from which inferior natures derive their consolation, under the apprehension of being driven out of public life. For him political disgrace was ruin—ruin of all for which he had lived and striven from boyhood until now. His habitual unreserve rendered it impossible for him to conceal the emotions by which he was agitated, however imprudent at such a moment their betrayal might be; and an incident occurred which, as detailed by one whom he ever after valued as his talents, accomplishments, and generous qualities deserved, may sufficiently illustrate the condition of his feelings, and the reckless candour with which he indulged in their avowal.

Mr. Fonblanque, with whom he had long been intimate, happened to enter the Athenæum Club, and hastily crossed the hall without perceiving that Sheil was standing alone near the fire. Hearing his name sharply called, he turned round, and encountered a look of mingled reproach and despondency too pain-

fully explained by the exclamation—"Are you also going to cut me?"

"Good God!" replied his friend, "how could you suppose me capable of slighting or neglecting you? What can have induced you to conceive such an idea?"

"Because I fancy that every man I meet is anxious to avoid me; and I knew not whether you might not be disposed to go with the rest."

Shocked by the ill-suppressed agitation of his tone and manner, Mr. Fonblanque drew him aside, and earnestly endeavoured to persuade him that he exaggerated greatly whatever symptoms of coldness or alienation he might have casually encountered. He expostulated with him on the imprudence of betraying anxieties which would be too readily ascribed, however wrongfully, to self-conviction; and tried to rally the sense of pride and moral courage which seemed to have been suddenly paralyzed within him. His utmost efforts for a considerable time were wholly fruitless, and he gladly availed himself of some excuse to seek for Mr. Charles Buller, with whom he almost immediately returned to their desponding friend. Hours passed away in animated discussion of all the various phases which the pending inquiry might assume, and the thousand possible and impos-

sible constructions that might be put upon every trivial word or ironical phrase of ill-remembered conversations. He was possessed with the idea that O'Connell long desired an opportunity of getting rid of him, and would seize upon the present occasion "to destroy him with his constituents in Ireland." Nothing could be more groundless than such an apprehension, as the sequel soon afterwards proved; but for the moment it was impossible to convince him of its fallacy. After a time his mind appeared to become somewhat more calm; but so deep and settled was the gloom that still hung over him, that his friends resolved not to leave him to himself, and insisted upon his spending the remainder of the day in their company. They dined together at the house of Mr. Fonblanque, and both of them accompanied him to his home. The greater part of the following day was spent in the same manner, and it was only by the continuous care and judicious kindness of his gifted and considerate companions, that he at length regained somewhat of his accustomed buoyancy and self-possession.

On the 10th of February, Mr. O'Connell put in a copy of the *Examiner* containing the report of Mr. Hill's speech; and the paragraph having been read,

Mr. Sheil rose and said, that "before his honourable and learned friend proceeded with the motion of which he had given notice, he would ask the House to extend its indulgence to him for a few seconds. He assured the House that he had no intention of interfering with the discussion that might arise on the question, lest he should by any ill-considered expression wound the feelings of any individual in the House; but he took the opportunity of repeating, with the simple strenuousness of one whose conscience was pure, that he was innocent of the charge imputed to him. He had no wish to take any part in the debate, but he earnestly called for a full and complete investigation. The course to be pursued in conducting that investigation he left to the wisdom of the House; he submitted his cause to their decision; he left his fate in their hands, and he threw himself entirely on the candour and justice of the House."

Mr. O'Connell moved that the paragraph should be referred to a committee of privileges. Sir Francis Burdett moved as an amendment, that the House do proceed to the order of the day. He thought the inquiry unnecessary, and could not see any useful end to which such a proceeding could lead. As far as the honourable and learned member for Tipperary was con-

cerned, he did not see that there was anything in the case to touch him, for he should be ashamed of himself if he did not solemnly declare his entire belief in that honourable and learned gentleman's asseveration of his innocence. He did not know how the committee were to proceed, the charge had already dwindled away, it had shrunk like a phantom and eluded the grasp; might it not happen to any public man to give a strong opinion in private on a particular measure, and afterwards on more mature consideration, to vote differently from what he had said? For his own part he could say that it had often happened to him to give his vote in that House differently from the impressions he had expressed in private as they first arose in his mind, but he did not think that in so doing he had been guilty of any dereliction of honourable principle, or of any political inconsistency. In the present case the charge was a calumny, or it was a story repeated from private conversation; but he did not think that matters taken from private conversation ought to be made the ground of a public charge amongst gentlemen.

A discussion followed, in which Sir R. Peel, Mr. Stanley, and others took part. The House divided, and the committee was carried by one hundred and

ninety-two to fifty-four. Mr. Sheil and his friends voting in the majority.

The following committee was then appointed:

Lord Granville Somerset.	Mr. Kemys Tynte.
Sir F. Burdett.	Mr. Gillon.
Sir E. Knatchbull.	Major Fancourt.
Colonel Maberly.	Mr. Shaw Le Fevre.
Sir H. Hardinge.	Mr. Warburton.
Mr. John Romilly.	Mr. Grote.
Colonel Verner.	Mr. Parrott.
Mr. Hawkins.	Sir R. Peel.
Mr. F. Shaw.	Mr. Abercrombie.
Mr. Hume.	Mr. Strutt.

The Committee met the following day and proceeded to elect Mr. Grote their chairman. Mr. Charles Phillips was in attendance as counsel for Mr. Sheil; but a resolution having been adopted that the investigation should be conducted with closed doors, none but members of the House were permitted to be present. The order of reference having been read, Mr. Hill was called upon to substantiate his charge. He declined positively to give up the name of his original informant but stated that he was prepared with other evidence. In this however he entirely failed, no witness being produced whose testimony served in any degree to support the allegations he had

undertaken to prove. As the last of the witnesses retired, Sir Robert Peel said, "I think it clear that there is an end of the case." Upon this Mr. Hill declared "that he felt convinced that his charge against Mr. Sheil, of having directly or indirectly communicated to the Government any private opinions in opposition to those which he expressed in the House of Commons, had no foundation; in fact that such charge was not merely incapable of formal proof, but was in his present sincere belief totally and absolutely unfounded; that he had originally been induced to make mention of it in a hasty and unpremeditated speech, under a firm persuasion that he had received it on undeniable evidence; but that being now satisfied of the mistake into which he had fallen, and convinced that the charge was wholly untrue, he came forward to express his deep and unfeigned sorrow for having ever contributed to give it circulation."* The Committee then adjourned to another day in order to consider the form of their report.

In a few hasty lines written the same afternoon to a friend in Ireland, where the result was looked for, not without anxiety, Mr. Sheil intimated that all shade of misgiving as to the issue had been swept from his

* Annual Register, 1834, p. 12.

incapable of formal proof, but was in his present sincere belief, totally and absolutely unfounded; that he had originally been induced to make mention of it in a hasty and unpremeditated speech, under a firm persuasion that he had received it on undeniable evidence; but that being now satisfied of the mistake into which he had fallen and convinced that the charge was wholly untrue, he came forward to express his deep and unfeigned sorrow for having ever contributed to give it circulation.' Mr. Hill added, 'that if there were any way consistent with honour by which he could make reparation to Mr. Sheil, he should deem no sacrifice too great to heal the wound which his erroneous statement had inflicted.'

"It is with the highest gratification that your Committee find themselves enabled thus to exonerate an accused member of Parliament from imputations alike painful and undeserved. The voluntary avowal of an erroneous statement on the part of Mr. Hill, puts it now in their power to pronounce a decided opinion, and to close the present inquiry. Neither of the witnesses who appeared before the Committee deposed to any facts calculated to bear out the allegation against Mr. Sheil; nor did their testimony go to impeach

his character and honour in any way, or as to any matter whatever. The Committee have no hesitation in declaring their deliberate conviction that the innocence of Mr. Sheil, in respect of the whole matter of complaint referred to their investigation, is entire and unquestionable.

"Your committee feel bound at the same time to express their full confidence in Mr. Hill's declaration, that the statement impeaching Mr. Sheil's character was made by him at Hull under a sincere though mistaken, persuasion of its accuracy. They derive this confidence as well from the tone of generous regret which characterized his communication at the close of their proceedings, as from the candid admissions, and the evident anxiety to avoid all exaggeration and mis-statements, which they have observed throughout his testimony, as he delivered it in their presence." Upon the reading of this report there were loud cries for Lord Althorp, who said, that no man rejoiced more at its contents than he did. He was called upon to state what his opinion was, now that he had heard the report of the Committee. As to the facts to which the report referred, he had no scruple at all in saying that he was satisfied with it. He had, since he last addressed the House, made inquiries re-

specting the information given him on the subject, and he was then prepared to say if the honourable and learned member for Tipperary asserted distinctly that he had not done what he had stated him to have done, that he believed his assertion. He was in this position. He had certain information given him on the authority of gentlemen on whose veracity he entirely relied. They might have been mistaken in what they stated to him. But if the honourable and learned member would then come forward and say it was untrue that he had ever used language in private different from that which he had used in public on the Coercion Bill, he would not only say that he entirely believed him, but he would also apologise to him for the language he had used.

Mr. Sheil rose amidst loud cries of "hear" from all parts of the House, which were succeeded by profound silence. After a short pause he said—

"I stood before this House a few nights ago with no other sustainment than the consciousness of my innocence; I now stand before it with that innocence announced, in the clearest and most unequivocal language, by a Committee composed of men themselves above all suspicion, to the world. I do feel my heart swell within me at this instant, and almost impede my utterance. Justice has been done me. It has been done not only by my judges but by my accuser—he preferred his charges in the

House, he reiterated them before the Committee, and having gone into his evidence and failed, he then offered me the only reparation in his power; and with a frankness of contrition which mitigates the wrong he did me, he came forward and announced that not only could he not prove his charge, but that he believed it to beutterly destitute of foundation. That gentleman having made this acknowledgment, then turned, and addressing himself to me, in the tone and with the aspect of deep emotion, asked me to forgive him. I had, I own, much to forgive; he had wounded me to my heart's core; he had injured me, and given agony to mine; he had committed a havoc of the feelings of those who are dearer to me than my life, and to whom my honour is more precious than my existence. He had furnished to the Secretary for the Colonies the occasion of addressing me in the language and with the gesture of solemn admonition, and of pointing out the results of an inquiry, in the tone of prophetic warning. I had indeed much to forgive, but I forgive him. . . We have heard much denunciation from Ministers respecting the disclosures of private discourse, and yet the Chancellor of the Exchequer, the representative of the Government, who entertains such a horror of a practice detested by all honourable men, is the very first to make reference to the babble of clubs, to declare his belief of information to which he gratuitously attaches an injurious importance, and to announce that he would not give up his author, but would take upon himself the responsibility. This defiance having been given, the House interposed; no resource was left me but to protest that I never expressed myself in favour of the Coercion Bill, and to demand inquiry. I insisted on it. The Secretary for the Colonies, out of regard no doubt for my reputation, pointed out the probable results. His suggestions had no other effect than to confirm me in my purpose, and to make me call more loudly for trial; that trial has proceeded, my private conversation at a Club-house has been given in evidence, and the Committee have declared me innocent of every charge which has been preferred against me. Did I shrink from the

ordeal? Did I resort to chicane? Did I make my honour a matter of casuistry and special pleading? No, Sir; I invited, I demanded investigation; and my private conversation at the Athenæum Club having been detailed—a conversation after dinner, never recollected even by the narrator for eight months—the accuser declared that his charge was totally destitute of foundation, and the Committee at once resolved on my unqualified acquittal. One of the informants of the noble lord was produced—why were they not all brought forward? My accusers were welcome to have got together every loose phrase, every casual and giddy expression, uttered in the moments of thoughtlessness and exhilaration; they were welcome to have selected and collected every sentence uttered by me in convivial gatherings, and to have raked and gathered the sweepings of club-houses, in order to have made up a mass of solid testimony, and to have cast it into the balance against me. They were welcome to have put me through an ordeal—such as not one of the ministers themselves could encounter. Which of you all would dare to stand the test? Which of you all would have the veil of his privacy rent to pieces, and all his thoughts uttered in the familiarity of common life divulged? But they were welcome to have got together all the whisperers and eavesdroppers of all their clubs against me; I should have defied them. I was prepared with proof to be given by my most intimate and confidential friends, the men with whom I have lived on terms of familiarity and of trust for upwards of twenty years, the companions of my early life, who know me as I do myself, and to whom my thoughts and feelings are almost as well known as their own. I should have been prepared with their evidence, and have established that wherever the Coercion Bill was glanced at, I condemned it in terms of unmitigated detestation. I denounced it as a violation of every one of those principles of liberty of which the Whigs were once the devoted but not unalterable champions. I did not once, but one hundred times, express my horror of the atrocities perpetrated in parts of the north of Ire-

land. I did say that to put ruffianism down, something ought to be done; I referred to the suggestions made by the Committee which sat in 1832, in the Queen's County, and which was composed of men of all parties; but never, I repeat with an emphasis into which heart and soul are thrown; never did I express myself favourable to a bill which I reprobated in this House, which I denounced elsewhere in terms of equally vehement censure; and if in place of standing here I were lying on my deathbed and about to appear in the presence of my God, I should not dread, with the utterance, of these words if they were to be my last, to appear before him."

It was not long before he resolved to make use once more of the position in Parliament with whose loss he had been threatened, but to which his right had been so honourably re-established. Public attention had for some time been little directed to foreign affairs. The protracted struggle regarding the Reform Bill, and the exaggerated anticipations that were cherished respecting its results, had rendered the nation more indifferent than usual to events in distant regions. The country was on terms of amity with France and the German Powers; and although popular sentiment occasionally found vent in vain expressions of sympathy for the Polish insurrection and detestation of Muscovite cruelty, the Government of Russia knew that it had nothing to apprehend from that of England. Earl Grey made no secret of his

adherence to the policy traditionally ascribed to Mr. Fox, respecting our relations with Turkey and Russia. Lord Holland and others of his colleagues entertained similar views. Retrenchment and non-interference in the concerns of other states had been prominently set forth in the programme of the Whig administration; and the Cabinet of St. Petersburg believed that these assurances might be literally construed. Experience fully justified this belief. Not only was revolt suppressed in Poland by the use of means at the recollection of which humanity turns pale, but every trace of the separate nationality of that unhappy country was ostentatiously effaced in deliberate violation of the boasted treaty of Vienna. Yet neither France nor England interfered; and when appealed to by the Porte for aid and protection against its rebellious vassal, the Pacha of Egypt, the Cabinets of London and Paris seemed either insensible to the danger that menaced the Sultan, or indifferent to the obligations he might be led to contract in requital of succour from the Czar. The Emperor Nicholas was not slow in improving the opportunity. By his interposition, the advancing tide of insurrection was peremptorily arrested, and the Ottoman empire permitted to resume its course of natural decay. Russia boasted of her

magnanimity, and contented herself with a treaty, whose provisions spread a closer and a subtler net than ever over her respited prey. Many circumstances contributed to cast suspicion upon the intention and significance of this memorable engagement. Its precise terms were not at first generally known, and when they became so, strong feelings of surprise and mortification were excited both in England and France. These sentiments indeed soon passed away, and the Emperor Nicholas was still further confirmed in the delusion he has recently avowed, that whatever the press of England might say of Russian policy, the nation at large would never seriously trouble themselves to counteract it. But while the events of 1833 were still fresh in popular recollection, they were deemed by many a suitable theme for observation in the House of Commons; and on the 17th of March, Mr. Sheil brought forward a motion on the subject of which he had given notice in a speech, which after the lapse of twenty years retains no little interest for the reader of the present day :—

"I shall endeavour, in discharging the duty I have undertaken, to avoid a spirit of partisanship which, in a question of this kind would be peculiarly out of place, and simply to present to the House the facts which I conceive should induce the noble lord at the head of the Foreign Department, to furnish the House

and the public with the documents I seek to have produced. The motion I have risen to make is this :—'Than an humble address be presented to his Majesty, that he will be graciously pleased to give directions that there be laid before this House, copies of any treaty or treaties which have been concluded between the Russian and Turkish Governments, since the 1st of January 1833, and which have been officially communicated to the British Government; together with copies of any correspondence between his Majesty's Government and the Russian and Turkish Governments, relative to the said treaties.'

I proceed at once to the statement of the facts, the incidents, and the documents, on which I rely. I shall not take any remote period, but commence at the autumn of the year 1831. In the autumn of that year the forces of the Pacha of Egypt began their march; on the 3rd of December 1831, the siege of Acre was commenced; in May 1832, Acre fell; Ibrahim proceeded on his march, and advanced into Syria; on the 14th of June, Damascus was taken. In July 1832, another great battle was fought, and Ibrahim advanced upon Taurus; he passed it. Any one who will give the slightest examination to the relative position of the two armies must see that the success of Ibrahim was inevitable. This was the state of affairs in July 1832. What was the course adopted by Turkey? She applied for aid to England. The fact is admitted, in a speech made by the noble lord in this House on the 11th of July 1833. It was further admitted by the noble lord, that if this country had then thought proper to interfere, its interference would have been effectual.

Lord PALMERSTON.—No.

Mr. SHEIL.—It is so stated. It has also been stated, but I know not whether on good authority, that the application of Turkey to this country for assistance was sustained by Russia, which power is said to have intimated her wish, or solicited, that the aid asked by Turkey should be given: England refused her assistance. That fact will not be questioned; it remains to be explained. It was asked at the time, why assistance was not

given to our ancient ally? But the events which subsequently happened gave retrospective force to the interrogatory; for it is impossible not to ask, with a sentiment stronger than mere curiosity, why it was that Turkey, when she sought our assistance, was thrown upon Russia as her only resource? The refusal having been given, is it not a most extraordinary circumstance that England sent no ambassador to Constantinople? The war began in October, 1831; Acre fell in May, 1832; Damascus, in June, 1832; the Taurus was passed; aid was asked from and refused by England; and yet no ambassador was sent from England! Let the noble lord, if he will have the goodness to note the questions I ask in the course of my statement, tell us how it happened that the war had been concluded two months before the English minister arrived at Constantinople? The battle of Koniah was fought on the 21st of September, 1832; and although this progress of Ibrahim attracted the attention of Europe, it does not seem to have induced the English Cabinet to give any acceleration to the movements of my Lord Ponsonby. He was appointed, I believe, in December, 1832; but he did not arrive in Constantinople till May, 1833, after the battle of Koniah had been fought, and application had been made by Turkey to Russia; and indeed after—as it is stated upon authority, I believe, worthy of credit, and which it will remain for the noble lord to confirm or contradict—Russia had written to the Sultan in the language of fraternal or diplomatic endearment, making him a tender of the assistance of Russia, whether that assistance was required by sea or by land. On the 17th of February, the French admiral, Roussin, arrived at Constantinople, and this leads me to remark upon a circumstance deserving of notice. It is this,—that not only England, but France, had no ambassador at Constantinople during the progress of the events I have mentioned. The reason of France being thus situated is said to be, that General Guilleminot, who had been there as ambassador, having suggested to the Porte, on the breaking out of the Polish insurrection, that that was a good opportunity to repair the disasters

and injuries of the war which terminated in the treaty of Adrianople, Prince Pozzo di Borgo applied to the French minister Sebastiani, to have him removed. I mention this as a kind of excuse for England, because France, having only a *Chargé d'Affaires*, it may be said that we were not called upon to have more than a Secretary of Legation. Admiral Roussin having arrived on the 17th of February, he on the 19th of February remonstrated with the Divan on the fatal effects to the Turkish empire which must result from calling in Russia as an auxiliary. On the very next day the Russian fleet appeared in the Bosphorus. There was however no immediate disembarkation. The French admiral remonstrated, but the English ambassador was not there to remonstrate, for Lord Ponsonby was relieving himself at Naples from the fatigues of his diplomatic negotiations in Belgium. An effort was made however to induce Ibrahim to retreat, but all it led to was the raising a question respecting the possession of Armenia. In that question, Admiral Roussin said he would not interfere, not wishing to concern himself in the domestic quarrels of the parties. He accordingly retired, and 20,000 Russians encamped on the Asiatic shore of the Bosphorus. Complete possession having been taken of Constantinople, Count Orloff arrived, if not before Lord Ponsonby, to much better purpose; for whilst he seemed to be engaged in the show and festivities of the capital, and the illuminations of their seraglio, he was all the while effecting a clandestine treaty with the Sultan, not only without the intervention, but without the knowledge of the English or French embassies. That was the treaty of the 8th of July, the production of which I seek from the noble lord. I have now, by a succinct narrative, brought down my statement to that important period, the 8th of July, 1833, the date of the subjugation of Turkey; not I hope of the dishonour of England. When was that treaty known by the noble lord? I may mention by the way a remarkable circumstance which took place in the House of Commons on the 11th of July.

My honourable friend who sits beside me (the member for Coventry) moved for certain papers respecting the recent transactions between Russia, Turkey, and Mehemet Ali. On that occasion the noble lord opposite pronounced a speech reflecting the highest credit on his diplomatic abilities. The noble lord stated, as a reason for not producing the papers, that the events to which they related could hardly be said to be brought to a close, and that the documents asked for ought not to be produced till a diplomatic wind-up had been arrived at; but he expressed sentiments worthy of a proselyte of Mr. Canning, observing that it was quite a mistake to suppose that England was not prepared to go to war if honour and dignity required it; mentioning, at the same time, that assistance had been refused to Turkey. This being on the 11th of July, the noble lord of course was not aware of the treaty of the 8th of July. How did the English public become acquainted with that treaty? Or perhaps the more proper question would be—how did the noble lord become acquainted with it? The noble lord obtained his first information touching, I will not say the details and particulars, but the substance of that treaty, from a letter which appeared in the *Morning Herald*, on the 21st of August, 1833, from its correspondent at Constantinople. In this letter it was stated that Count Orloff had succeeded completely in throwing dust into the eyes of the English and French ambassadors; for that, whilst he appeared to be absorbed in all the gaieties of the Turkish metropolis, he was in reality prosecuting the deep and dark designs which Russia had so long entertained; and that on the 8th of July he had induced the Sultan to conclude an offensive and defensive treaty, admitting the virtual surrender to Russian dominion of all the rights of Turkey.

The particulars of that treaty, beyond three articles, the writer did not pretend to know; but he added, that the next day Count Orloff set off for St. Petersburg; that the greatest confusion and dismay prevailed among the other diplomatic bodies; and that they had despatched couriers to their respective courts. This

letter was brought under the attention of the House of Commons on the 24th of August, by the honourable and gallant member for Westminster, on which occasion the noble lord stated in his place, that of the treaty of the 8th of July he officially knew nothing whatever; the only information he had upon the subject being through the medium of the public journals, upon whose activity he passed a just panegyric—an activity which certainly on that occasion much surpassed that of the agents of the Government. The noble lord on that occasion admitted a second time that Turkey had asked for assistance from England before applying for it to Russia. I have now brought myself down to the 24th of August, 1833. On the 29th of August the King delivered his speech from the throne on the prorogation of Parliament. With these facts, or these rumours, which at all events ultimately turned out fatal facts—with all these circumstances before it—the Cabinet advised his Majesty to declare in his speech from the throne—and that speech must constitutionally be considered the speech of his Majesty's Ministers—that the relations between Turkey and England remained undisturbed.

Let the House bear in mind that the noble lord, if he had not received the despatch forwarded to him on the 9th of July, certainly had had his attention called to the treaty of the 8th of July on the 14th of August; and yet he persuades his colleagues to advise his Majesty to say on the 29th of August—

'The hostilities which had disturbed the peace of Turkey have been terminated; and you may be assured that my attention will be carefully directed to any events which may affect the present state or the future independence of that empire.'

I now pass at once to the month of October in the same year. In October, M. La Grenée, the French *Chargé d'Affaires*, addressed a letter to Count Nesselrode of a most remarkable kind. Considering the close junction which subsisted between the Courts of St. James's and the Tuilleries—a junction which I hope still continues—considering the fidelity of that alliance to be

mutual—it is hardly too much to look upon this note as if it came from the noble lord himself sitting in Downing-street. This note of M. La Grenée was written in October, but was not published in Paris till the 23rd of December, 1833, when it came before the whole of the European public. I pray the particular attention of the House to this note. Our attention has lately been directed to matters of domestic interest and immediate pressure; but be it remembered, that events are now going on which are fraught with consequences that may affect our domestic interests as much as others which only appear larger because more near. The note of M. La Grenée to Count Nesselrode runs thus:—

'The undersigned *Chargé d'Affaires* of his Majesty the King of the French has received orders to express to the Cabinet of St. Petersburg the profound affliction felt by the French Government on learning the conclusion of the treaty of the 8th of July last, between his Majesty the Emperor of Russia and the Grand Seignior. In the opinion of the King's Government, this treaty assigns to the mutual relations existing between the Ottoman Empire and Russia a new character, against which the powers of Europe have a right to protest.'

To this note Count Nesselrode replied in the following curt, offensive, and almost contumelious language:—

'It is true that this act changes the nature of the relations between Russia and the Porte, for in the room of long-continued hostilities it substitutes that friendship and that confidence in which the Turkish Government will henceforth find a guarantee for its stability and the necessary means of defence, calculated to ensure its preservation. In this conviction, and guided by the purest and most disinterested intentions, his Majesty the Emperor is resolved, in case of necessity, to discharge faithfully the obligations imposed on him by the treaty of the 8th of July, thus acting as if the declaration contained in the note of Monsieur La Grenée had no existence.'

'*St. Petersburg, Oct.*, 1833.'

This note is taken from the *Augsburgh Gazette*, to which it purports to have been transmitted in a letter from Paris on the 23rd of December. Here let one remark be made, which will not trench on the distinct classification of facts. If the French Government remonstrated, it is to be presumed that the noble lord did not remain silent. Where is his correspondence? Was a note as affronting written in reply, or was it even couched in more caustic phraseology, and in the same style of contemptuous repudiation as the article in the *St. Petersburg Gazette* on the presumption of our interference in the affairs of Poland? To return to dates and facts—on the 1st of January, Pozzo di Borgo addressed the King of the French, and on that occasion the accomplished Corsican pronounced on Louis Philippe an eulogium, accompanied with protestations, characteristic of both—of the party who indulged in, and the party who was graciously pleased to accept, the hollow panegyric. Six days after in bringing up the address, M. Bignon delivered a speech which was received with equal surprise and acclamation. He denounced the conduct of Russia towards Poland, and held out the aggressions upon Turkey as indicative of that deep and settled purpose of which he had in his official capacity a perfect cognizance. In 1807, he said, Alexander had tendered all Southern Europe to Napoleon, provided Napoleon would give him what he called at once in homely but powerful diction—the key of his own house—Constantinople. That offer was refused; the consequences were foreseen by Napoleon. M. Bignon then warned France to beware of the advances of Russian power in the East, and denounced, while he revealed her policy, and invoked his countrymen to awaken to a sense of the insults offered to the dignity of France, and the violation offered to her rights. To this speech the Duc de Broglie made an answer conspicuous in itself, and which his subsequent conduct rendered still more remarkable. He expressed his unqualified concurrence in all that had been said, and thanked M. Bignon for having given expression to the sentiments which he and his colleagues entertained. On the very next day this very man went down to the Chamber, and made a

speech which was received with astonishment by both countries. He contended that no violation of treaty had taken place, expressed satisfaction with Russian policy, and stated that there had been no material alteration made respecting the passage of the Dardanelles. M. Thiers, in reply to M. Mauguin, said nearly the same thing; and although La Grenée's note was yet fresh in every memory, and the Duc de Broglie's approval of Bignon's speech was ringing in every ear, expressed no sort of discontent at any one of the incidents which had taken place. M. Thiers, however, incidentally acknowledged that it was a part of the treaty, that all vessels of powers at war with Russia should be excluded from the passage of the Dardanelles. Our own Parliament did not meet until the 5th of February; but before it assembled an accident occurred which remains to be explained. The French and English fleets united, proceeded to the Dardanelles, which Russia had spared no expense to fortify; and, having displayed the tricolor, and 'the meteor flag of England,' as it has been nobly called, near the spot where Sir George Duckworth, when Lord Grey was Secretary for Foreign Affairs, expended a good deal of powder without much avail, both fleets sailed away, and instead of proceeding to Smyrna, gave a preference to a more distant and far less commodious harbour, where however Russian influence was not quite so predominant as in that celebrated haven. The glory of this expedition belongs to the First Lord of the Admiralty; but it is to be conjectured that the achievement was suggested by the genius of the Secretary for Foreign Affairs. But in what did it result? That remains to be told; and for the satisfaction of that curiosity I this night afford an opportunity. Parliament met on the 5th. The King's speech informed us that the integrity of the Porte was for the future to be preserved (the Sultan having been first stripped, and then manacled), and that his Majesty continued to receive assurances which did not disturb his confidence that peace would be preserved. The Duke of Wellington, in another place, adverted to the treaty of Constantinople, and Lord Grey retorted Adrianople upon his Grace. But in the treaty of Adri-

anople there was, at all events, nothing that infringed upon our rights as to the navigation of the Black Sea; and it is to be recollected that whatever the First Lord of the Treasury might have said, the Secretary for Foreign Affairs declared that—'while he desired peace, of war he was not in the least afraid.' In this House no interrogatories were put. On the 24th of February the following paragraph appeared in the *Globe*, which, from its being the supposed organ of Government, deserves great attention, the more especially as we are left to the newspapers for our intelligence. The article stated—

'Another treaty between Russia and Turkey has been concluded at St. Petersburg, which was signed by Achmet Pacha on the 29th of last month. . . . . Enough has transpired to satisfy the most jealous that its spirit is pacific, and indeed advantageous to the Turkish empire. The Porte is relieved from the pressure of the engagements imposed upon her at Adrianople; and we understand that the Principalities, with the exception of Silistria, will shortly be evacuated, and the sum exacted by the former treaty reduced one-third. Such relaxations of positive engagements are proofs either of the moderation and good sense of Russia, or of the influence which the union of England and France, and the firm and concerted language of those two powers, have acquired in the councils of St. Petersburg.'

Is it not reasonable that this treaty should be laid before the House? It is to be observed, that in any account of it, either in our journals or in the *Allgemeine Zeitung*, not one word is said of the passage of the Dardanelles. The principalities of Wallachia and Moldavia, indeed, are to be evacuated. That circumstance is a mere delusion; for Wallachia and Moldavia are as much dependent on Russia as if they had actually been transferred. Their hospodars are virtually nominated by Russia; no Turk can reside in the country; and every appointment down to that of the humblest officer, is affected through Russian dictation. Silistria is retained—the key of the lower Danube, commanding all Bulgaria, and a place so important that the Greek

Emperors constructed a wall there to protect their frontier, and guard against the incursions of the barbarians. As to the remission of money, that concession is made to an insolvent debtor; it is not the first time that Russia has adopted the same course; the payment of a tribute is of little moment from a country which is almost incorporated in her dominions, and will soon meet the fate of so many of the Turkish provinces; but how does this treaty modify or affect that of the 8th of July? It does not at all relate to it. It concerns the treaty of Adrianople; and as long as we have nothing else on this question, the House is entitled to receive adequate information from the Government. With respect to the Dardanelles, a matter of signal importance to England—affecting her commerce—affecting not only the navigation of the Euxine, but giving Russia a control over Greece and the entire Archipelago,—it may be as well to state with brevity the treaties that existed between England and Turkey, and those that existed between Russia and Turkey, previous to that regarding which information is demanded. I will not go back to the reign of Elizabeth. By the treaty of 1675, concluded by Sir John Finch, the navigation of all the Turkish seas was secured to England. In 1809, a little time after our rupture with the Porte, produced by the attack on the Dardanelles, a new treaty was executed, by which the passage of the Dardanelles and the canal of Constantinople was secured to England. The 11th article provided, that in time of peace no ship of war should pass, no matter to what country it might belong. In 1774, by the treaty of Kaynadgi, the passage of the Dardanelles was first secured to Russian merchant vessels. In 1780 a quarrel took place respecting an armed vessel. In 1783 a new treaty was entered into, and another in 1792 (that treaty by which the Crimea, just like Greece, was declared independent, and then absorbed in Russian domination), and by both treaties the passage was secured to merchant vessels only.

In 1800, Russia having obtained the protectorship of the Ionian Islands (their importance we felt in 1815, not so much

because we desired to acquire, as to take them from a power that aimed at predominance in the Mediterranean), entered into a treaty, securing the passage to the merchant vessels of the islands. In 1812, the treaty of Bucharest was signed, by which Bessarabia was given up to Russia, and all former treaties respecting the Dardanelles were confirmed. In 1829, the treaty of Adrianople was signed, and with respect to the Dardanelles contained the following passage:—

'7th Article. The Sublime Porte declares the passage of the canal of Constantinople completely free and open to Russian merchant vessels under merchant flags, from the Black Sea to the Mediterranean, and from the Mediterranean to the Black Sea; upon the same principle the passage is declared free and open to all merchant vessels belonging to powers at peace with the Porte. The Porte declares, that under no pretence whatsoever will it throw any obstacle in the way of the exercise of this right, and engages, above all, never hereafter to stop or detain vessels, either with cargo or in ballast, whether Russian or belonging to nations with which the Porte shall not be in a state of declared war.' In the manifesto published by the Emperor Nicholas on the 1st of October, 1829, he says:—

'The passage of the Dardanelles and the Bosphorus is henceforth free and open to the commerce of all the nations of the world.' Thus the stipulation was, that all nations at peace (not, be it observed, with Russia, but with the Porte), should enjoy the right of unimpeded passage; but how has that been affected by the treaty of the 8th of July? Will it be said that nothing was accomplished by the Autocrat by that treaty? If so, why was it signed without the knowledge of our ambassador, and in a clandestine and surreptitious way? What are its provisions? Do the public journals give a just account of it? Is it true that it provides that no vessels belonging to a power at war with Russia shall enjoy that right? If so, the alteration is palpable; and if there be no express declaration to this effect, let there be an alliance offensive and defensive, and the Porte is bound to

consider every enemy of Russia as its own; the consequence is precisely the same as if the Porte surrendered to Russia the possession of the Dardanelles; and the last of the Sultans is the first satrap of Nicholas the Great.

There does not appear to be any sound reason for withholding this treaty. It has been the subject of remonstrance by France—of debate in the French Chamber—of diversified commentary in the public journals. Why withhold it? There must be a strange inconsistency in publishing all the enormous answers to protocols respecting Belgium, where the transaction is as yet incomplete, and in refusing to furnish anything but materials for surmise on this treaty. Ponderous folios of fruitless negotiations on the affairs of Belgium have been given to the world. Let the Government act upon the principle adopted in that case, and give the English people the means of forming a judgment of the policy which his Majesty's Ministers have adopted in a question where the national honour and interest are so deeply involved. It may be said, 'Trust in the Minister, be sure that he will not desert his duty, or acquiesce in any measure incompatible with the honour of England.' I should be disposed to do so, when I take into account that the Secretary for Foreign Affairs was a political follower of Mr. Canning, who considered the interests and the honour of England as so closely blended; and although the noble lord may have abandoned the opinions on domestic policy which were entertained by Mr. Canning where he was in the wrong, it is to be presumed that he adhered with a closer tenacity to those opinions in foreign policy where Mr. Canning was in the right. But this ground of confidence in the noble lord is modified if not countervailed by the recollection, that in many recent transactions he has been baffled by that power which has gathered all the profligate nobility of Europe together, in order to compound a Cabinet of Machiavellian mercenaries to maintain the cause of slavery through the world. Look at Belgium—look at the Russian-Dutch loan. The noble lord, although guided by the Prince of Benevento, has lost his way in the laby-

rinth which Russia has prepared for him and Poland. 'We shall,' he exclaimed, 'remonstrate.' We did remonstrate, and despatched Lord Durham to St. Petersburg, (why was not Sir Stratford Canning there?) and what has been the result? If confidence is to be entertained in the noble lord, it must be built on some firmer basis than his entertainment of the treaty of Vienna. Instead of calling on the people of England to confide in him, let him build his confidence in the English people. They are attached to peace, but they are not afraid of war. Our fleet could blow the Russian navy from the ocean. England is yet a match for the Northern Autocrat, and there is might enough left in her arm to shatter the Colossus that bestrides the sea by which Europe is divided from Asia, and which has been accounted from time beyond record one of the demarcations of the world."

The motion was seconded by Mr. (now Sir) Henry Bulwer, and was supported by Colonel Davies and Colonel De Lacy Evans. Lord Palmerston declined to lay upon the table either the treaty or the correspondence to which it led. He admitted that the former, when its terms had become known, had appeared in certain respects to be open to objection; but explanations having in consequence been sought for, the most satisfactory assurances had been given by the Government of Russia. As the correspondence, however, was not yet closed, it would not be for the public service to produce it, or the convention to which it related. The question was one of confidence in Ministers, and could not be regarded by the House in any other light.

Sir Robert Peel observed that in addition to the well-merited compliments paid to Mr. Sheil for the manner in which he had brought forward the motion, it might with truth be said that his was "an unanswered speech." If it was true that the revolt of Mehemet Ali had been stimulated secretly by France, our intimate relations with the Government of that country might, perhaps, account for Turkey having been left wholly to the protection of Russia; but in his opinion, the real independence of Turkey was gone from the day that the Sultan had been compelled to summon a Russian army to Constantinople as the only means of defending it against his rebellious subjects. He thought the case made out for the production of papers could only be met by Ministers on the ground of their official responsibility. No other reason had in his opinion been assigned. Mr. Stanley replied; and the motion was negatived without a division.

By the rejection of Mr. O'Connell's motion on the 29th of April, by a majority of 523 to 38, Repeal as a Parliamentary question, was set at rest; that of Tithes remained. Many of the English Liberals believed that from that prolific source of party strife and predial crime, popular agitation had de-

rived the character of national animosity. Among the Dissenters in every part of the country no little sympathy was felt for the struggle waged in Ireland by the Catholics to get rid of the tithe system; and the whole of the Radical press in Scotland, as well as in England, with one voice demanded its extinction. Had this been all, the question might nevertheless have continued to figure in the category of those which form the subject of unpractical pledges by candidates desiring to represent populous towns, and to furnish a theme for evaporative patriotism in the House of Commons, without giving much cause of anxiety either to sinecurists, or to enthusiasts on behalf of the Establishment. But the passive resistance, as it was somewhat inappropriately termed, to the collection of tithes throughout the greater part of Ireland, rendered it one which, if pressed by a powerful section of the Liberal party in Parliament, it was impossible for Government to evade. A million sterling had been voted to relieve the actual wants of the Protestant clergy, in the expectation that under a uniform scheme of conversion into land-tax, and with the removal of the minor irritation occasioned by the levy of vestry cess, the combination against tithes would die away. No symptom of such cessation

however appeared. The police, and even the King's troops, were harassed by continual service in the miserable work of protecting tithe proctors, and securing distresses levied for small sums. The Government had, without avail, become collector-general of the unpopular impost; and those who were most solicitous in preserving its moral influence and sanction, shrunk from the spectacle, and earnestly desired to see the civil and ecclesiastical authorities dissociated, so far at least as the exaction of the incomes of the clergy was concerned.

Meanwhile it had become absolutely indispensable that some further attempt at legislation should be made. Tithes were not collected, and the clergy were reduced to absolute want. A bill had been prepared, under the advice of Lord Wellesley, by which tithes, as a tax leviable from the occupiers of land, were to be wholly abolished, and in lieu thereof a new impost, termed a rent-charge, was to be imposed upon the owners of property, equivalent to four-fifths of the average amount previously paid by the tenantry. The resolution moved by Mr. Littleton, as Secretary for Ireland, on which the bill embodying this plan was to be grounded, had been opposed by Mr. Sheil and

those who shared his opinions, as unsatisfactory, and as being calculated in no respect to settle the question at issue. It might enlist the pecuniary interests of the landlords in enmity to the Church, but it would fail to reconcile the people to the payment, under the name of additional rent, of a tax whose exclusive purpose was to remain unchanged. On the second reading of the bill, on the 2nd of May, these objections were reiterated; and Mr. Sheil pointedly asked if members of the Government were or were not agreed amongst themselves as to the ultimate appropriation of surplus ecclesiastical revenues, if, under improved management in the mode of collection, any such should arise? The notoriety of their disagreement on this head rendered this interrogatory all the more perplexing. While the Secretary for the Colonies firmly adhered to the doctrine of the inalienability of Church property, and resisted various proposals of Mr. O'Connell and others for a modification of the bill, Lord John Russell defended it upon the ground that he considered it a project to preserve and economise a great fund devoted to purposes of religion and morality, and that if these purposes were hereafter found to be imperfectly answered, it would be within the province of Parliament to consider what

improved mode might be adopted for its appropriation. These sentiments were hailed by a numerous section of the Liberal party as inaugurating a new policy; but as yet no direct recognition of their adoption by the administration of Lord Grey was made.

While Ministers remained divided as to the course which they ought to pursue, on the 27th of May, Mr. Ward moved the following resolution:—"That the Protestant Episcopal Establishment in Ireland exceeds the spiritual wants of the Protestant population; and that it being the right of the State to regulate the distribution of Church property in such manner as Parliament may determine, it is the opinion of this House that the temporal possessions of the Church of Ireland, as now established by law, ought to be reduced." Mr. Grote having seconded the motion, Lord Althorp, without giving an opinion on the merits of the question, asked the House, in consequence of peculiar and important circumstances that had just come to his knowledge, to suspend the discussion until the 2nd of June, when he should be prepared to state the reasons which had led him to propose this unusual course. It soon transpired that the circumstances were the secession from the Ministry of Mr. Stanley, Sir James Graham, the Duke of Richmond, and Lord

Ripon, who, finding themselves out-voted in the Cabinet by those who approved of the principle contained in Mr. Ward's resolution, had determined to resign. The vacant offices were immediately filled by Mr. Spring Rice, Lord Auckland, the Marquis of Conyngham, and Lord Carlisle. When the House re-assembled, these changes, and some others consequent thereon, were explained; and it was announced that a Royal Commission had been appointed to inquire into the proportions of the population in every parish in Ireland, together with the means of religious and secular instruction in each. This inquiry which by implication involved the whole principle in controversy, was objected to by Mr. Stanley and Sir R. Peel; but Mr. Ward having refused to withdraw his motion, the previous question was carried by 396 to 120. Subsequent modifications, with a view to conciliate the owners of property whose estates were to become so heavily chargeable to the Crown, were proposed by Mr. Littleton, upon which Mr. Stanley openly assailed his late colleagues as guilty of insidious designs for the spoliation of the Church, and compared their conduct to the practice of those who plundered the unwary by means of the game called "thimble-rig." Many fruitless dis-

cussions ensued; and before any progress could be made with the bill, new and unlooked-for changes in the Government occurred.

The Coercion Act of the preceding session had been passed for but one year. In moving its re-enactment on the 1st of July, Earl Grey had stated that it had been found effectual for its purpose; agrarian disturbances had indeed greatly diminished, but this was attributable in no slight degree to the curb placed on political agitation, with which, in the opinion of the then Lord-Lieutenant of Ireland, these outrages were "connected by an indissoluble chain of cause and consequence;" Lord Wellesley had therefore recommended that, with the exception of the clauses respecting courts-martial, the Act in its entirety should be renewed. Two days after, Mr. O'Connell stated in the Commons that, upon the assurance of the Secretary for Ireland, given on the 20th of June, that the clauses against public meetings should be abandoned, he had induced an opposition candidate to withdraw from Wexford, and that he had been led to believe that the Irish Government had *not* required their retention in the bill, and that if the whole of the correspondence with Lord Wellesley on the subject were produced, this fact would appear.

A warm altercation followed, but it was admitted by Mr. Littleton that he had in confidence led Mr. O'Connell to expect the modifications he had named, and averred that he had done so on what he deemed sufficient authority. On the 7th of July a portion of the correspondence was laid upon the table. From this it appeared that a change of opinion on the part of the Lord-Lieutenant had taken place recently on the subject in dispute, though the precise cause was not explained. Mr. O'Connell then challenged the Government to deny that, in the judgment of Lord Wellesley, Mr. Littleton, and of five members of the Cabinet—namely, Lord Althorp, Mr. Grant, Mr. Spring Rice, Mr. Abercrombie, and Mr. Ellice, deliberately formed and recently expressed, no necessity existed for the continuance of the obnoxious provisions. The appeal was not responded to in the House; but on returning home the same night, Lord Althorp addressed a letter of resignation to the Premier. Lord Grey on this determined to quit office, and Lord Melbourne was by the King named as his successor; Lord Althorp resumed his post as Chancellor of the Exchequer, and Lord Duncannon became Secretary for the Home Department.

The first act of the new Prime Minister was to

announce in the House of Lords, on the 17th of July, that Government did not intend to proceed with the Coercion Bill, but that another bill, omitting the clauses objected to, would be introduced without delay. A good deal of discussion took place on the details of the new measure, in which Mr. Sheil took part. It was eventually passed for a period of twelve months, without further modifications, on the 29th of July.

The consideration of the Tithes Bill was then resumed. Its further progress was opposed on the same grounds as formerly, and the lateness of the session was used as an additional plea. When all efforts at postponement had failed, Mr. O'Connell moved an amendment reducing the charge on land by two-fifths, which was to be payable to the Crown: and securing to the clergy somewhat more than three-fourths of their usual incomes—the difference to be made up out of the Consolidated Fund. On a division, this was carried by eighty-two to thirty-three, and Government having adopted the alteration thus introduced, the Bill was sent up to the Lords, where, a few days afterwards, it was rejected by a majority of sixty-seven.

With these proceedings may be said to close the Parliamentary struggle between the Irish popular

party and the Whigs. On the two great points of practical difference in legislation, Ministers had conceded much. In administrative details they were prepared to adopt a course equally conciliatory. No man was so well qualified to carry into effect such a policy as Lord Duncannon; the only man perhaps possessing the confidence of his own class, who at all times and under all circumstances retained the personal good-will and public respect of O'Connell. A man of few words and of great firmness of resolution, the newly-appointed Home Secretary had great discernment and temper; he avoided argument where his mind was made up and he knew that agreement was impossible; but wherever he believed that a kindness or a mark of respect ought to be shown, he was beforehand with the person whom he wished to gratify, and disdained to take any personal credit for conferring a favour where he was really acting upon public grounds. Every one who came in contact with him felt safe in relying on his word, and involuntarily laid aside that worst of all misgivings in the transaction of public business—the fear that advantage may be taken of some ill-considered phrase or doubtful word. Lord Duncannon never made any man regret that he had trusted him. Hence he was trusted

by persons the most opposite in opinions and irreconcilable in their enmities; and if he had possessed no other quality, this would alone have rendered him peculiarly well fitted to be the organ of communication between the Government in England, the local executive in Ireland, and the chiefs of the section in the House of Commons that had been hitherto in violent opposition. His views regarding the government of Ireland were fully in accordance with those of Lord Wellesley, already noticed; and an opportunity soon arose of manifesting them. In the month of September, Mr. Crampton was promoted to a seat on the judicial bench, and the office of Solicitor-General having been declined by Mr. Perrin (on grounds highly honourable to him) was conferred on Mr. O'Loghlen, who, after O'Connell, occupied the most eminent position at the Catholic bar. "He was one of those," said Sheil, "upon whom Emancipation had fortunately come just at the period of his career when promotion being possible was inevitable."* This was the first administrative office conceded, since the passing of Emancipation, upon any individual of the long-excluded creed. It led, by the rule of recognised promotion, to the Attorney-Generalship, to the Privy

* Article in Metropolitan Magazine, July, 1831.

Council, and to the Bench; and as an earnest of equality too long delayed, it was regarded with no little satisfaction by the educated class of the Catholic community. Before time had been given for any further development of the policy contemplated by the administration over which Lord Melbourne had been called to preside, the administration itself was suddenly brought to an end. Lord Althorp's elevation to the peerage by the death of his father, had rendered the choice of a new Leader in the Commons, and other changes, necessary; and when on the 14th of November, the arrangements proposed were submitted to the King, his Majesty informed Lord Melbourne that he had no longer sufficient confidence in the ability of the Whigs to carry on the Government, and that he intended to seek the advice of the Duke of Wellington. By the recommendation of his Grace, Sir Robert Peel was sent for to Italy, and on his return he undertook to form a Conservative Cabinet. The elements of which it was composed left little room for doubt as to the principles by which it was likely to be animated. In his celebrated address to the electors of Tamworth, the new Premier sedulously strove to allay the prejudices which as anti-Reformers, he was conscious that he and his colleagues would have to

encounter. A dissolution of Parliament before he had had an opportunity of bringing forward his measures, or practically demonstrating the policy he meant to pursue, was indeed a great disadvantage. But to go on with the existing House of Commons would have been manifestly impossible. There was nothing for it but a bold appeal to the spirit of reaction which had already set in, and which it was supposed might be sufficiently stimulated to obtain an acquiescence, if not an approval, of the hazardous experiment on the temper of the nation which the Court had made.

In the preparations to meet the coming struggle past differences were forgotten. It was obvious that any open schism in the liberal party must ensure its defeat. Every effort was therefore directed by those who took an active part in the coming elections to induce co-operation where hitherto there had been distrust and discord. In Ireland the Repeal question was no longer made the exclusive test of eligibility; and the Anti-Tory Association took the place of that which had previously existed for the dissolution of the Union. Whigs and Repealers stood and were returned together for various counties, and amongst the latter were Mr. O'Connell and nearly all of his immediate friends. Some doubt at first prevailed as to

the second candidate for Tipperary. The expense in case of a contest would of necessity be formidable; and of those who were willing to be nominated along with Mr. Sheil, none seemed to be in any haste to incur equal liability with him in the cost. One day, while engaged in consultation with his committee, a letter was received from Mr. E. Jacob, offering himself as a candidate for the county, stating his principles at considerable length, and engaging, *if returned*, to pay 500*l.* towards the general expenses of the election. When the reading of the letter was concluded, Sheil asked, was that all? and on being answered in the affirmative, exclaimed, "So, then, the proposition is that I am to fight the county for two, and bear all the charge, with no other indemnification than the hypothetical I O U of Ebenezer Jacob! We had better, I think, return to business." They did so, and an acceptable colleague being soon afterwards found in the person of Mr. Otway Cave, both were returned without much difficulty.

CHAPTER XVII.

1835—1837.

Ministers in a minority—Motion regarding Lord Londonderry—Lord J. Russell's resolutions regarding the Irish Church—Resignation of Sir Robert Peel—Reconstruction of the Whig Ministry—Lichfield-house compact—Rejection of the Irish Church Bill—Orange lodges—Municipal Reform—Lord Lyndhurst's "alien" speech—Speech in reply to Lord Lyndhurst—Death of William IV.—Peculiarities in mode of public speaking; acting.

In the choice of a Speaker, Ministers were, on the 19th February, defeated by a majority of ten; and on the 26th Lord Morpeth's amendment to the Address was carried against them by a majority of seven. Sir Robert Peel however did not resign; and upon being questioned as to whether he intended to retain office without being able to command a majority in the House of Commons, he declared that it was his inten-

tion to bring forward his measures in detail, and if that course were not approved of by the leaders of Opposition, he challenged them to bring forward a motion of want of confidence. But this, in direct terms, it was not their policy to do. The circumstances in truth are rare in which such a motion has any chance of being carried, whatever the weakness of a Government may be; and it is obvious that its defeat must always tend to strengthen the hands it is designed to weaken. Various points of attack however soon presented themselves; amongst the rest was that of the selection of the Marquis of Londonderry as ambassador at the court of St. Petersburg. On the 13th of March, Mr. Sheil brought the subject under the notice of the House in a temperate and judicious speech. He disclaimed all objection to the noble lord on personal grounds, but remonstrated against his nomination to so important a trust on the gravest reasons of public policy. The encroaching spirit of Russia had never before needed to be so closely watched. By our negligence and apathy in 1828, and again in 1832, we had suffered Turkey to fall almost within her grasp. If it were not yet too late to put a check upon her ambitious career, the Government of England must be wakeful and ener-

getic, and prepared, if occasion should arrive, to act promptly and with vigour. But how could this be done unless the representative of the country at the court of the Emperor Nicholas were a man of high intellectual qualities and of thoroughly liberal views? The opinions which Lord Londonderry had publicly expressed, not only regarding Poland, but with respect to the conduct of Russia towards the Ottoman Porte, disqualified him peculiarly for such an office. Nor had he any pretensions on the score of diplomatic experience or mental endowments which could compensate for the want of coincidence between his known sentiments on foreign policy with those of the great majority of the nation. Lord Stanley, Mr. Cutlar Ferguson, and Mr. Hobhouse supported these views; and though the appointment was defended by Sir Robert Peel, the effect of the discussion was felt to be highly damaging to the Government, and three days afterwards Lord Londonderry declared in the House of Lords that he had spontaneously relinquished the honour intended for him.

But the question which was destined more than any other to test the strength and decide the fate of parties, was that of the Irish Church. On the 30th March, Lord John Russell moved, "that the House

resolve itself into a Committee of the whole House, in order to consider the present state of the Church establishment in Ireland, with the view of applying any surplus of the revenues not required for the spiritual care of its members to the general education of all classes of the people, without distinction of religious persuasion." The motion was supported by Mr. Ward, Mr. Sheil, Lord Howick, Mr. C. Wood, Dr. Lushington, Mr. Spring Rice, Mr. O'Connell, &c. &c.; and was opposed by Sir E. Knatchbull, Sir J. Graham, Mr. Gladstone, Sir R. Inglis, Sir W. Follett, Mr. Praed, Sir H. Hardinge, Lord Stanley, and Sir R. Peel. After four nights' debate it was carried by 322 against 289. A second resolution expressive of the same principle was carried, after another long debate, by a majority of twenty-five; and finally, on the following day, a third resolution was moved by Lord John, declaring that "no measure on the subject of tithes in Ireland can lead to a satisfactory and final adjustment, which does not embody the principle contained in the foregoing resolutions." This was adopted by 285 to 258. On the following day Sir Robert Peel resigned; and Lord Melbourne, after an interval of just six months, was restored to power. Lord John Russell became Home Secretary,

and Leader of the House of Commons; Lord Palmerston resumed his place as Minister for Foreign Affairs, and the Marquis of Lansdowne that of Lord President; Mr. Spring Rice was made Chancellor of the Exchequer; Lord Mulgrave went to Ireland as Viceroy, with Lord Morpeth as Chief Secretary.

The combination by which this rapid and complete reversal of the retrograde policy of the Court had been effected, naturally became the most prominent topic of party discussion. Various steps had been taken during the brief term of Lord Melbourne's administration towards the conciliation of both the English and the Irish Radical party, without whose aid it had become impossible for the Whigs, after the secession of Lord Stanley and his friends, to claim a majority in the Commons. In the Lords they were still weaker; and their summary dismissal from office, almost without an intelligible pretext, had proclaimed to the world their loss of influence with the Court. Without a fusion, therefore, cordial and complete, between the different sections of the Liberal party, it was plain that no effective resistance could be made to the re-establishment in power of those who had hitherto resisted to the last every measure of political reform, and whose policy abroad was avowedly one of

sympathy in the maintenance of absolutism. The most conservative of the Whigs were convinced by the results of the general election, that without such concessions as would justify the support of the Radical party in Parliament, they could not hope to regain the position in the country which they had lost. While democratic sentiments had gained fresh influence, and found additional representatives in the new House of Commons, those of a more aristocratic tendency had lost ground. In Hampshire, Lancashire, and several other counties, Conservatives had taken the place of Whigs,* while in many of the commercial towns they were ousted by candidates who gave pledges in favour of the Ballot,† and the recognition of entire equality of creeds in the eye of the law. The former of these it was agreed should henceforth be treated as an open question; and as a practical step towards the latter, the principle of the well-known appropriation clause in the Irish Tithe Bill was adopted. These, together with an understanding that the benefits of Municipal Reform should be extended to all parts of the United King-

* Speech of Sir W. Molesworth on the Ballot, 2nd June, 1838.

† In favour of Mr. Grote's motion there appeared 146 members (or nearly one-half of the whole liberal party) on the 2nd June, 1835.

dom, formed the basis of that alliance which, under the nickname of the "Lichfield-house compact," furnished an inexhaustible theme of party taunt and reproach during several ensuing years. The sobriquet was formed by the ingenious perversion of a phrase made use of by Mr. Sheil, on one of the occasions when the principal members of the sections before alluded to assembled for the purposes of conference at the house of Lord Lichfield, in St. James's-square. In congratulating those present upon the prospect of united action, arising from united counsels, he expressed his hope that no personal jealousies or minor differences would be permitted to mar their compact and cordial alliance. The expression was repeated by him in public not long afterwards, as it had originally been used; but was mis-reported so as to turn the inoffensive adjective into a substantive of sinister implication. No subsequent disclaimers or corrections could efface its recollection from the public mind. "A Compact" was never spoken of by Mr. Sheil, as in point of fact it never had any existence. Three parties in the State agreed to act together, for common objects, without relinquishing their peculiar views; but personal or unworthy stipulations of any kind there were none, nor was any

engagement secretly entered into at variance with the avowed objects which, in common, all who were concerned assented generally to promote and to sustain.*

Mr. Sheil had actively contributed towards the furtherance of this combination, and the division lists proved that without the Irish popular party it must have been wholly ineffectual. Yet he neither received nor asked for any favour or distinction; and though zealously supporting the new administration during that and the following sessions, he was fully aware that during the lifetime of William IV. office was never likely to be offered to him. The old feeling of resentment on account of the Duke of York continued after an interval of ten years, to animate the feelings of the Sovereign; and a Minister, whom he had reluctantly been compelled to accept, gladly post-

* "The noble lord (Alvanley) has asked whether I have taken any means to secure the assistance of Mr. O'Connell, and if so, upon what terms? I do not know whether I shall have that assistance or not; but I can state most distinctly that I have entered into no terms whatever, nor said anything from which any inference could be drawn, in order to secure that individual's support. If the noble lord has been told anything to the contrary, he has been told that which is false and without foundation."—Speech of Lord Melbourne in the House of Lords, 18th April, 1835.

poned the ungracious duty of naming in the royal closet one whom he knew to be an object of peculiar aversion. Of Lord Melbourne's friendly disposition towards him, Mr. Sheil never entertained any doubt; and the consideration with which he began to find himself treated by his party generally, was calculated to make amends for the arbitrary exclusion which he felt to be unjust. But he had other consolations. For the first time as a Parliamentary speaker, he had tasted the enjoyment of great and unalloyed success. As the nominee of a Whig borough-owner, he had been listened to with curiosity and attention, but without either the sympathy or regard he would have been sure to have enlisted had he been an Englishman and a Whig. "The curse of Swift was upon him, to have been born an Irishman;" and he had in addition the prejudices to encounter which attached to his religious belief, and his past political career. As an Irish county member he had felt himself compelled to take part with his fellow-countrymen in resisting energetically the system of sectarian monopoly and misrule which had been carried on, regardless of the remonstrances of Lord Anglesea and Lord Wellesley, at the instance of Mr. Stanley, whom he once designated in debate as "the Secretary at War with

Ireland." During the whole of 1833 and 1834 he had virtually been in opposition, and as we have seen, in frequent personal collision, with the leading members of the Government. What he said was listened to, indeed, during that period with interest; but it was the interest which is paid to unwelcome rebuke or damaging attack. Below the gangway, on the Ministerial side, there sat many who frequently concurred in the views of policy propounded by him rather than in those enunciated from the Treasury bench. But theoretical coincidence is one thing and party support is another. His intrepidity in assault, and his eloquence in reply, were acknowledged by men who did not care to make themselves remarkable by giving him their cheers; and if the policy of conciliation and concession, as opposed to that of exclusion and coercion, had been weighed only in the balances of rhetorical applause, the principles he advocated would seem to have made as little progress as the man; but now all was changed. The principles which he had been contending for had become "the dividing lines" of party, and the existence of Government had been staked and won upon their being declared indispensable. When he rose to speak he had for the first time the assuring consciousness that

he had a powerful party at his back, ready, if he spoke well, to do him justice and award him the full meed of honours due. Musicians who have never sung without choral accompaniments may affect to despise such advantages, but before they hazard confident opinions on the subject, they would do well to try the effect of a crowd's silent stare, or of the interruption which any empty pate may cause by an ironical cheer. Upon the sensitive temperament of Mr. Sheil the effect of the change was soon perceptible; and he was too happy, in getting out of the frozen regions of sectional opposition, to conceal his keen enjoyment of the more genial latitude of appreciation in which at length he found himself. He spoke better, because he spoke with more ease; and he not only seemed, but in a certain sense he became more effective, because the feelings he kindled in others contributed in their turn to warm his own with an intenser glow.

Reform of the English Municipalities, and another attempt to settle the Irish Church question, occupied the chief part of the remainder of the session. A bill brought in by Lord Morpeth proposed that seven-tenths of the existing tithes should in future be paid by the proprietors of the soil, instead of the occupying

tenants, to the incumbents of such parishes as contained more than fifty members of the Established Church; where less than that number resided, the produce of the rent-charge into which tithe was to be commuted was to go, first to the augmentation of small livings, within certain limitations; and if any surplus remained it was to be applied to general purposes of education. Out of 2505 parishes it appeared, by the report of the Commissioners of Public Instruction, that to 860 the latter rule would apply. To the former provisions, which did not materially differ from those contained in a bill introduced by Sir Henry Hardinge, no opposition was made; but, on going into committee, Sir Robert Peel moved the separation of the first and second portions of the measure, with a view to the adoption of the one and the rejection of the other. A prolonged debate ensued; Lord Stanley, Sir J. Graham, Mr. Goulburn, Sir R. Inglis, Mr. Lefroy, and Mr. Jackson, supporting the amendment; and Mr. Spring Rice, Lord Howick, Mr. O'Connell, Lord Morpeth, and Lord J. Russell opposing it. The speech of Mr. Sheil was of unusual length, and in the mode of its delivery exemplified for the first time the change of feeling already adverted to. His manner had in it more of

confidence and self-possession. His gestures did not betoken less excitement, but there was less anxiety in his look—less questioning of the temper of his auditory in the tone of his voice. Better speeches he had more than once made, of which little was thought, and nothing said in the lobbies or the newspapers, for they were addressed to empty or to hostile Houses; but to find three hundred gentlemen impatient to utter their assent to each sentiment before the last folds of its brilliant amplification could be presented to them—this was new to him, and called up within him long-forgotten dreams and long-cherished aspirations.

Sir Robert Peel's amendment was negatived by 319 to 282; but a similar proposal was carried in the Lords, on the 20th of August, by 138 to 41, whereupon Ministers announced their intention of abandoning the bill.

During the session of 1835, attention had been particularly drawn to the resuscitation and spread of Orange lodges throughout the kingdom. On the 6th of March, Mr. Sheil moved for copies of addresses presented to the King, and the replies given, in his Majesty's name, by the Home Secretary (Mr. Goulburn) to members of the Society; and on the 23rd

of March, Mr. Finn moved for a Select Committee to inquire into the character, extent, and tendency of Orange lodges in Ireland. The Committee was agreed to, and proceeded to take evidence in great detail. Before its investigations had concluded, Mr. Hume brought before the House certain facts and statements which created no ordinary sensation.

The disclosures made before the Committee of Inquiry form in truth, a strange and almost startling episode in the unromantic annals of Parliament in our day. A vast confederacy, ramified throughout all classes of society, and recently introduced into the ranks of the army, was found to be united by secret oaths, and directed by secret signs and orders. At the head of this combination was the Duke of Cumberland, the heir in reversion to the throne, a man whose life had caused him to be regarded with the deepest feelings of popular suspicion. Defence of Protestant institutions was the professed object of the society, and by many of its members, doubtless, no other thought had ever been entertained. But the love of plotting and adventure had fired some of the more restless and ambitious of the brotherhood with dangerous designs. The full scope of these was never thoroughly explained; but enough was laid

bare to show that they must be summarily crushed, if the latter days of the then existing reign were not to be distracted by doubts and fears as to the peaceful succession to the Crown. A series of resolutions condemnatory of the introduction of Orangeiśm into the army, was moved by Mr. Hume, and with certain modifications, adopted by the House. In the debate which occurred on the subject, Mr. Sheil took a prominent part,* and an address to the Crown was eventually voted, praying the Sovereign to discourage by all legitimate means, the existence of an association whose secret and sectarian character was ill-suited to promote peace and goodwill among the community at large. A still stronger censure was passed by the Commons early in the following session, and a more urgent appeal made to the King. William IV., in his reply, declared his determination "to take measures for the effectual discouragement of Orange lodges, and of all political societies excluding persons of a different religious faith, using secret signs and symbols, and acting by means of associated branches."† In consequence of this announcement on the part of the Sovereign, the Orange Society was

* Debate, 11th August, 1835.
† 25th February, 1836.

publicly declared, by the Duke of Cumberland, to be dissolved.

Returning to Ireland after the prorogation, Mr. Sheil passed the greater portion of the autumn with his family at Long Orchard. During September he was actively engaged in preparing for the registration of county voters, whose number was subsequently increased by several hundreds. "The popular party ought to be on the alert: I fear that they content themselves with speeches, and think that they will drown Conservatism by offering libations to freedom."*

Municipal Reform having been enacted for Scotland and England, the claim of Ireland to a like benefit could not be resisted, if the principle of equal laws and liberties for all parts of the United Kingdom were to be maintained. This principle had been solemnly guaranteed by the act of Union, and with equal solemnity reiterated by the three estates of the realm, when refusing to dissolve that great compact in 1834. A palpable test of the sincerity of these professions now presented itself. No one denied that the corporate institutions of Ireland needed reformation even still more than those of Great Britain had done. A population of 900,000 dwelt in the seventy-

* Extract of a letter, 27th September, 1835.

one cities and towns where municipal government nominally existed; yet the total number of persons who, as freemen or burgesses, participated in that system of civic rule, did not exceed 13,000, and of these less than three hundred were Catholics. Sectarian exclusion formed confessedly the root of the system; partiality in the administration of justice, and peculation in the disposal of the local rates, were its notorious fruits. A Commission of Inquiry, presided over by Mr. Perrin, had reported after careful investigation, that in the great majority of instances no sufficient elements existed within these bodies for their healthful or useful reconstitution. What then was to be done? The Cabinet of Lord Melbourne did not hesitate. In the speech from the Throne, on the 14th February, 1836, a hope was expressed that a remedy might be applied to the defects and evils in those institutions, founded on the same principles as those of the acts already passed for England and Scotland; and a few days after the Attorney-General for Ireland, Mr. O'Loghlen, introduced a bill framed in conformity therewith. In the debate on the address, Sir R. Peel refused to recognise, in terms however general, the right of Ireland to an identity of civil institutions; and argued that as good

government might be insured in countries differently circumstanced by the adoption of different means, other forms of local rule might be more fitted to accomplish such a result on the western side of the Channel, than those which had been adopted on the eastern side. The view thus indicated was more fully developed upon going into Committee on the bill, by Lord Francis Egerton, who on the part of the Opposition, moved that it was expedient that municipal corporations should thenceforth cease altogether to exist in Ireland; and he explained a plan by which their functions might be in future discharged, partly by other local bodies, and partly by persons nominated by the Crown.

Mr. O'Connell, on behalf of those who at his instance had laid aside the demand for Repeal, declared that if this proposition met with the approbation of the Imperial Legislature, all idea of preserving the Union must be considered as at an end. Lord Stanley ridiculed his assumption of the character of a national plenipotentiary, authorized to treat for a settlement of differences between the two countries, and warmly supported the scheme of abolition. He expressed great apprehensions lest, if made elective, the remodelled corporations would become mere

"normal schools of agitation," under the direction of the great master of that democratic art; and confident prophecies were indulged in by his lordship and those who followed on the same side, that the change would only amount to the substitution of one species of religious ascendency for another. Mr. Sheil reminded Sir R. Peel that in 1829, he had assured the Catholics that they should henceforth be practically admissible to a just share in the local government of their towns, but the result had been that they were as completely excluded as ever; "he had given them a key which would not turn in the lock." Then addressing the ex-Premier, he exclaimed:—

"You have seen administration after administration dissolved by the power of the Irish people. By the power of the Irish people you have seen your own Cabinet dashed in an instant to pieces; and now, struck to the heart, you behold your own gigantic auxiliary laid low. Taught so long, but uninstructed still, wherefore in the same fatal policy, with an infatuated pertinacity, do you disastrously persevere? You think, perhaps, that Emancipation has failed. Six years in a nation's life are less than as many minutes of individual duration. You have not given it (what you asked for yourself) a fair trial, and have yourself to a certain extent counteracted its operation. At the very outset you entered into a struggle with the Son of the Earth, who has rebounded with fresh vigour from every fall; and notwithstanding all your experience—although injustice carries with it the principle of self-frustration—although the poisoned chalice is sure, in its inevitable circulation, to return to the lips of those by

whom it is commended—still, adhering to your fatal policy, and haunted by your anti-O'Connellism—still, instead of rising to the height of the great argument, and ascending to a point of moral and political elevation from which you could see wide and far—you behold nothing but objects which, by their closeness, become magnified, and have nothing but the fear of O'Connell before your eyes. You do not legislate for a people, but against a man. Even if I were to admit that he had been occasionally hurried into excesses, for which your impolicy should in reality be responsible, give me still leave to ask whether millions of his fellow-countrymen, and your fellow-citizens (for such, thank God! we are), and generations yet unborn, must pay the penalty? Granting him a life as long as Ireland can pray for, and his adversaries can deprecate, will he not be survived by the statute-book? Have you made him immortal as well as omnipotent? Is your legislation to be built on considerations as transitory as the breath with which he speaks; and are structures that should last for ages to have no other basis than the miserable antipathies by which we are distracted? Let us remember, in the discharge of the great judiciary functions that are imposed upon us, that we are not the trustees of contemporary interests only, but of the welfare of those by whom we are to be succeeded; that our measures are in some sort testamentary, and that we bequeath to posterity a blessing or a bane; and, impressed with that high—and I do not exaggerate when I call it that holy—consciousness, let us have a care lest to a sentiment of miserable partisanship we should give way. To distinctions between Catholic and Protestant let there be an end. Let there be an end to national animosities as well as to sectarian detestations. Perish the bad theology which, with an impious converse, makes God according to man's image, and with infernal passions fills the heart of man! Perish the bad, the narrow, the pernicious sentiments which for the genuine love of country, institute a feeling of despotic domination upon your part, and of provincial turbulence upon ours;—and while upon pseudo-religion and pseudo-patriotism I pro-

nounce my denunciation, live (let me be permitted to pray) the spirit of philanthropic, forbearing, forgiving Christianity amongst us! and combined with it, live the lofty love of country which associates the welfare of both islands with the glory of this majestic empire."*

Lord John Russell declared that, with all his anxiety to maintain the stability of the legislative incorporation of the three kingdoms, he could not deny that if treated with such distrust and such inequality, the people of Ireland would have some reason to say that they could not repose confidence in a British Legislature.

On a division, the amendment was rejected by 307 to 243, and early in April the bill was sent up to the Lords. There a very different reception awaited it. Neither sympathy nor fear of consequences exercised any influence over the majority of the peers. In Ireland, popular excitement had subsided with the accession to office of an administration to whom Mr. O'Connell gave his support; and in England there was little general interest taken in the fate of an exclusively Irish bill. The project of abolition was therefore brought forward anew. It was moved on the 26th April, by Lord Fitzgerald, and advocated in a speech destined long to be remembered both in

* Debate, 28th March, 1836.

and out of Parliament, by Lord Lyndhurst. Having analyzed the various portions of the measure with a skill in which he is unrivalled, he undertook to show that all the real duties elsewhere performed by municipal bodies, would in Ireland be better discharged by authorities differently constituted. The pretension of the inhabitants of Irish towns to the rights of citizenship which the burgesses of England enjoyed, he treated with lofty scorn. Condensing into a few brief but pregnant sentences all the prejudice and passion which make up the sense of national aversion and contempt, he warned the House of Lords to beware how they clothed with the municipal privileges of Englishmen a community, a large proportion of whom were "aliens in blood, language, and religion." A majority of 203 to 119 approved the course thus recommended; and the whole of the clauses by which new corporations were to be called into existence were struck out of the bill. An attempt made by the Duke of Richmond to preserve municipal institutions in ten of the largest towns, was likewise rejected, and the measure was returned to the Commons so altered as hardly to retain a trace of what it had been. Some ineffectual efforts at a compromise succeeded, and the bill fell to the ground.

A renewed attempt to carry a measure for the settlement of the Irish tithe question, embodying the disputed principle of secularising the surplus revenues of the Establishment, proved equally unsuccessful. Mr. Sheil's name occurs frequently in the course of these discussions. The subject was one around which every topic of party interest was necessarily grouped for several successive years. The debates of the time are full of fierce taunts and personal recriminations; and in the use of polished invective none shone more conspicuous than he. Nothing contributed more to enhance his popularity with the House than the exercise of this power. Beyond a passing jest, he seldom paused to comment on the inconsistencies or errors of obscure opponents. His aim was almost invariably at higher quarry. He seldom spoke of Sir Robert Peel or the Duke of Wellington otherwise than with marked consideration and deference, but against Lords Stanley and Lyndhurst the arrows of his sarcasm were incessantly directed, and rarely without effect.

Next session the struggle was renewed regarding Irish Municipal Reform. A bill for that purpose was early introduced. The Opposition resolved on taking the same course that they had adopted in

1836; and in a speech of more than even his accustomed vivacity and vigour, Lord Stanley announced their determination not to yield to clamour, or threats of agitation against the hereditary privileges of the House of Lords. It was in reply to this speech that Mr. Sheil, on the 23rd of February, delivered what was deemed at the time his greatest oratorical effort in Parliament, and the effect produced by portions of which upon the House, was probably greater than any since the memorable denunciation of Napoleon uttered by Mr. Pitt in 1804. Following in debate Sir James Graham, he began by acknowledging, in terms of mingled eulogy and sarcasm, the obligations under which he had been laid by the right honorable baronet who, in quoting from an address delivered by him during the vacation, had paid a high tribute to his rhetorical powers:

"The right honourable baronet has adverted to what he calls 'the Lichfield-house compact.' It is not worth while to go over the same ground, for I have already proved, by reading in the House the speech which has been the subject of so much remark, how much I have been misrepresented. I never said that there was a 'compact.' I did say, and I repeat it, that there was 'a compact alliance.' Was that the first occasion on which an alliance was entered into? Was Lichfield-house the only spot ever dedicated to political reconciliations? Has the right honourable baronet forgotten, or has the noble lord (Stanley)

who sits beside him, succeeded in dismissing from his recollection, a meeting at Brookes's Club at which the Irish and English Reformers assembled, and in the emergency which had taken place, agreed to relinquish their differences and make a united stand against the common foe? Does the noble lord forget an admirable speech (it was the best post-prandial oration it was ever my good fortune to have heard) delivered by a right honourable gentleman, who was not then a noble lord, and which was accompanied by a vehemence of gesture and a force of intonation not a little illustrative of the emotions of the orator, on his anticipated ejectment from office? That eloquent individual, whom I now see on the Tory side of the House, got upon a table, and with vehement and almost appalling gesture, pronounced an invective against the Duke of Wellington to which, in the records of vituperation, few parallels can be found. I shall not repeat what the noble lord then said.

Lord STANLEY.—You may.

Mr. SHEIL.—No; my object is not to excite personal animosities among new, but ardent friends. I have no malevolent motive in adverting to that remarkable occasion. If I have at all referred to it, it is because the right honourable baronet has been sufficiently indiscreet to talk of Lichfield-house. Let him for the future confine himself to the recollections of Brookes's, instead of selecting as the subject of his sarcasms the meeting in which that reconciliation took place to which Ireland is indebted for the exclusion of the noble lord opposite and his associates from power."

Proceeding then to the consideration of more general interest and importance, he traced the gradual uprise of popular strength in Ireland, and argued against the impolicy of attempting now to legislate for that country in any other spirit than that of equality,

or with any other aim than that of complete incorporation. In an expostulatory tone he referred to the language held by Sir Robert Peel in 1829:—

"If it was intended that we should not have the benefit of Catholic Emancipation in this particular, it ought in common candour to have been told us; but to pass an act making us admissible—to allow seven years to pass, and permit the law to be frustrated in that interval—and then, when a measure is brought forward in order to give us the advantage of that law, to destroy corporations lest we should be admitted—is not consistent with English fairness, with that honest dealing for which you are conspicuous, nor, let me add, with the personal character of the right honourable baronet. Ay, but the Church may be injured. Why did you not think of that when Emancipation was being carried? Why make your argument in favour of the Church posterior to your legislation against it? I call on the right honourable baronet, not only in the name of justice to us, but in the name of his own dignity, as he would preserve that amity with himself which results from the consciousness of honest and noble dealing—I call on him to abandon his party, in adherence to his pledge; and if between his politics and his integrity he must make a choice, I know that he will not hesitate for a moment in making his election.

He fears an injury to the Church. This Church, by which a single object contemplated in a national establishment has never yet been attained—this Church of yours is made the burden of every speech by which the cause of Toryism is sought to be maintained; and to every project for the improvement of the country, and the assertion of the people's rights, it is presented as an insuperable obstacle. When we call on you to abolish the fatal impost which keeps the country in a paroxysm of excitement, you cry out, 'the Church!' When we bid you rescue the country from the frightful litigation which turns our courts of justice into an arena for the combat of the political passions,

you cry out, 'the Church!' And when we implore you to fulfil your contract at the Union, to redeem your pledge given with Emancipation, to extend to us British privileges, and grant us British institutions, you cry out, 'the Church!' The two countries must have the same church, and for that purpose the two countries must not have the same corporations! They are incompatible; we must then elect between them; which shall we prefer—the church of one million, or the corporations of seven? What an argument do the auxiliaries of the Establishment advance when they admit that the sacrifice of the national rights is necessary for its sustainment! But if this position be well-founded, wherefore was Parliamentary Reform ever conceded to us? Are we qualified to elect members of the House of Commons, but unfit to elect members of a Common Council? Are we unworthy of being the managers of our own local concerns—while here, in this Imperial assembly, with the legislators of the British empire, with the arbiters of the destiny of the noblest nation in the world, we stand on a lofty level? Never was there any inconsistency comparable to this! I have a right to rise up here, and to demand justice for my country, as representative of the second county in Ireland; and I am unworthy of being a corporator of Cashel or of Clonmel! I may be told that the Tories resisted the extension of Parliamentary Reform to Ireland, and on the very grounds on which they oppose the application of Corporate Reform. I must acknowledge it: they did insist that the close boroughs of Ireland were intended as the bulwarks of the Protestant interest; they did contend that a Catholic ascendency would be the result of Parliamentary Reform; and they urged with great zeal and strenuousness that the demolition of the Established Church would be its inevitable consequence. In what a burst of lofty eloquence did the noble lord who now sits opposite refute them! 'What!' he exclaimed, 'deny to Ireland the benefits of the reform you give to England—withhold from Ireland the advantages which, at the Union, you pledged yourselves to grant her! deny her a community in your pri-

vileges, and an equal participation in your rights! Then you may repeal the Union at once, for you will render it a degrading and dishonourable compact.' But I do injustice to that admirable passage; and as the noble lord may have forgotten it, as his recollections may be as evanescent as his opinions, I think it better to read what from memory I have imperfectly referred to. The passage will be found in the 17th volume of 'The Mirror of Parliament,' page 2288. He begins with a panegyric on the Irish members. We were agitators then just as much as we now are; we held and professed exactly the same opinions; we had an Association at full work just as we now have; but the noble lord did not, at that time, think it judicious to appeal to prejudices to which he has since addressed himself. The passage runs thus:—

'We have been told that the English bill does not in any case apply to Ireland, and that the circumstances of the two countries are different: but I am sure that honourable gentlemen will find that the principle of Reform is the same, whether it is applied to England or Ireland; and if it be just here, so it must be just there. I would entreat those who advocate the Conservative interests, and who consider themselves the supporters of Protestant institutions, to look to the danger to which these institutions will be exposed in Ireland by withholding the privileges which this bill is to confer. If they wish to give Ireland a real, solid, substantial grievance—if they wish to give some handle to excitement, and to present a solid argument for the Repeal of the Union—they need only show that in the British House of Commons English interests are treated in one way, and Irish interests in another; that in England the Government rule by free representation, and by the voice of the people—while in Ireland that voice is stifled, and the people are shut out from a fair share in the choice of their representatives. I fear that if we do not concede in a spirit of fairness and justice, agitation will break out in a manner which it has never done before. I cannot conceive anything more clear than that the present measure is only the extension of the principle of the English bill to Ireland. I

cannot conceive upon what principle we can refuse to place both countries on an equality, and make the same principle applicable to the election of all members of the united Legislature of the British empire.'

The House has heard this passage with surprise; and although every sentence that I have read has produced a sensation, there is not, in the entire, a sentiment which has called forth more astonishment than the reference made to the Repeal of the Union, as a result of the denial of equal privileges to the English and to the Irish people. And here let me turn to the right honourable member for Cumberland, and ask him what he now thinks of his expostulation with the Irish Attorney-General on his assertion that injustice would furnish an argument for Repeal? Did not his noble friend when in office, when Secretary for Ireland, solemnly assert the same thing? I will read the passage again—'If they wish to give Ireland a real, solid, substantial grievance—if they wish to give some handle to excitement, and to present a solid argument for the Repeal of the Union—they need only show that in the British House of Commons English interests are treated in one way, and Irish interests in another.' This is nobly expressed; but in the midst of our admiration of such fine sentiments, founded on such lofty principles, and conveyed in language at once so beautiful and so perspicuous, what melancholy feelings, what mournful reflections arise! Alas! that the man who uttered what I have just read, who was capable of feeling and of expressing himself thus, in whom such a union of wisdom and eloquence was then exhibited—alas! that he should now be separated from his old associates, and that, united to his former antagonists, he should not only act on principles diametrically the reverse, but denounce his colleagues, and enter with the men whom he formerly represented as the worst enemies of his country, into a derogatory league. But, not contented with joining them, in the transports of his enthusiasm he has gone beyond them; and on the first night of this debate, taking up the part of a prophet, when he had ceased to perform that of a statesman, he told the people of

Ireland, in a burst of intemperate prediction, that never—no, never—should the municipal privileges granted to the people of England be extended to them.

Lord STANLEY.—I never said so.

Mr. SHEIL.—Then the noble lord has been grievously misrepresented. I acknowledge that I was not present when he spoke, but I was told by several persons that he had stated that this measure never should be carried.

Lord STANLEY.—I did not state that the measure never should be carried. I did state that the people of England would not yield to alarm and intimidation, and that the advocates of this measure were taking the worst means to effect their object. The honourable and learned gentleman confesses that he was not present when I spoke, and he should therefore be cautious in attributing to me the opinions which he has ascribed to me in this attack which he has been making, knowing, as he does, that it is out of my power to reply.

Mr. SHEIL.—When the noble lord denies the use of certain expressions, and disclaims the sentiment conveyed by them, I at once accede to his interpretation of what he said, or rather meant to say. The noble lord observes that I am making an attack on him, knowing that he has no reply. The noble lord is well aware, from experience, that whether he has a right to reply or not, I never had the least dread of him, and that on no occasion in this House have I ever, in the performance of my duty to my country, shrunk from an encounter with him. He calls my speech an attack on him. I am not pronouncing a personal invective against the noble lord. I am not exceeding the limits of fair discussion, or violating either the ordinances of good breeding or the rules of this House. I am exhibiting the inconsistencies and incongruities of the noble lord, and stripping his opinions of any value which they may possess, by proving him, at a period not remote, to have acted on and to have enforced principles directly opposite to those of which he is now the intolerant advocate. This is the extent of my attack on him.

He will however pardon me for suggesting to him, that if I did assail him with far more acrimony than I am disposed to do, he is the last man in this House who ought to complain. Who is there that shows less mercy to a political adversary? Who is so relentless in the infliction of his sarcasms, even on his old friends and associates? However, I ought not to feel much surprise that he should be so sensitive as he shows himself to be: no man fears an operation so much as a surgeon, and the drummer of a regiment trembles at the lash. . . I am convinced that the people of England, so far from being disposed to array themselves against us, despite any remains of the prejudices which are fast passing away in this country, feel that we are entitled to the same privileges, and extend to us their sympathies in this good and glorious cause.

What is that cause? I shall rapidly tell you. You took away our Parliament—you took from us that Parliament which, like the House of Commons of this country, must have been under the control of the great majority of the people of Ireland, and which would not and could not have withheld what you so long refused us. Is there a man here who doubts that if the Union had not been conceded, we should have extorted Emancipation and Reform from our own House of Commons? That House of Commons you bought, and paid for your bargain in gold; ay, and paid for it in the most palpable and sordid form in which gold can be paid down. But, while this transaction was pending, you told us that all distinctions should be abolished between us, and that we should become like unto yourselves. The great Minister of the time, by whom that unexampled purchase of a Legislature was negotiated, held out equality with England as the splendid equivalent for the loss of our national representation; and, with classical references, elucidated the nobleness of the compact into which he had persuaded the depositants of the rights of their countrymen to enter. The act of Union was passed, and twenty-nine years elapsed before any effectual measure was taken to carry its real and substantial terms into effect.

At last our enfranchisement was won by our own energy and determination; and when it was in progress, we received assurances that, in every respect, we should be placed on a footing with our fellow-citizens; and it was more specially announced to us, that to corporations and to all offices connected with them, we should be at once admissible. Pending this engagement, a bill is passed for the reform of the corporations of this country: and in every important municipal locality in England councillors are selected by the people as their representatives. This important measure having been carried here, the Irish people claim an extension of the same advantages; and ground their title on the Union, on Emancipation, on Reform, and on the great principle of perfect equality between the two countries on which the security of one country and the prosperity of both must depend. This demand on the part of Ireland is rejected; and that which to England no one was bold enough to deny, from Ireland you are determined, and you announce it, to withhold. Is this justice? You will say that it is, and I should be surprised if you did not say so. I should be surprised indeed, if, while you are doing us wrong, you did not profess your solicitude to do us justice. From the day on which Strongbow set his foot upon the shore of Ireland, Englishmen were never wanting in protestations of their deep anxiety to do us justice:—even Strafford, the deserter of the people's cause—the renegade Wentworth, who gave evidence in Ireland of the spirit of instinctive tyranny which predominated in his character—even Strafford, while he trampled upon our rights, and trod upon the heart of the country, protested his solicitude to do justice to Ireland. What marvel is it then that gentlemen opposite should deal in such vehement protestations? There is however one man of great abilities, not a member of this House, but whose talents and whose boldness have placed him in the topmost place in his party—who disdaining all imposture, and thinking it the best course to appeal directly to the religious and national

antipathies of the people of this country—abandoning all reserve, and flinging off the slender veil by which his political associates affect to cover, although they cannot hide their motives—distinctly and audaciously tells the Irish people that they are not entitled to the same privileges as Englishmen; and pronounces them in every particular which could enter his minute enumeration of the circumstances by which fellow-citizenship is created, in race, identity, and religion, to be aliens—to be aliens in race—to be aliens in country—to be aliens in religion. Aliens! good God! was Arthur, Duke of Wellington, in the House of Lords, and did he not start up and exclaim, 'Hold! I have seen the aliens do their duty?' The Duke of Wellington is not a man of an excitable temperament. His mind is of a cast too martial to be easily moved; but notwithstanding his habitual inflexibility, I cannot help thinking that when he heard his Roman Catholic countrymen (for we are his countrymen) designated by a phrase as offensive as the abundant vocabulary of his eloquent confederate could supply—I cannot help thinking that he ought to have recollected the many fields of fight in which we have been contributors to his renown. 'The battles, sieges, fortunes that he has passed,' ought to have come back upon him. He ought to have remembered that from the earliest achievement in which he displayed that military genius which has placed him foremost in the annals of modern warfare, down to that last and surpassing combat which has made his name imperishable—from Assaye to Waterloo—the Irish soldiers, with whom your armies are filled, were the inseparable auxiliaries to the glory with which his unparalleled successes have been crowned. Whose were the arms that drove your bayonets at Vimiera through the phalanxes that never reeled in the shock of war before? What desperate valour climbed the steeps and filled the moats at Badajos? All his victories should have rushed and crowded back upon his memory—Vimiera, Badajos, Salamanca, Albuera, Toulouse, and last of all, the greatest——. Tell me, for you were there—I appeal to the gallant soldier before me (Sir Henry Hardinge)—from whose opi-

nions I differ, but who bears, I know, a generous heart in an intrepid breast;—tell me, for you must needs remember—on that day when the destinies of mankind were trembling in the balance—while death fell in showers—when the artillery of France was levelled with a precision of the most deadly science—when her legions, incited by the voice and inspired by the example of their mighty leader, rushed again and again to the onset—tell me if for an instant, when to hesitate for an instant was to be lost, the 'aliens' blenched? And when at length the moment for the last and decisive movement had arrived, and the valour which had so long been wisely checked was at last let loose—when, with words familiar but immortal, the Great Captain commanded the great assault—tell me, if Catholic Ireland, with less heroic valour than the natives of this your own glorious country, precipitated herself upon the foe? The blood of England, Scotland and of Ireland, flowed in the same stream, and drenched the same field. When the chill morning dawned, their dead lay cold and stark together;—in the same deep pit their bodies were deposited—the green corn of spring is now breaking from their commingled dust—the dew falls from heaven upon their union in the grave. Partakers in every peril—in the glory shall we not be permitted to participate; and shall we be told, as a requital, that we are estranged from the noble country for whose salvation our life-blood was poured out?"

Lord Lyndhurst was present during the delivery of this speech, and upon the marked allusion to his too well-known words of the preceding year, every eye was turned upon him. Kindling with the excitement he himself produced, and yielding to the dramatic impulse of the moment, as he indignantly reiterated the word "Aliens," the orator waved his hand reproachfully

towards the spot where Lord Lyndhurst was sitting. The effect of the tone in which the word was uttered, and of the gesture by which it was accompanied, is said to have been indescribable. The whole House gave way to conflicting emotions, and as no intelligible sound could be heard for many minutes in the storm of cheers and exclamations, many on both sides arose from their seats in their curiosity to observe the expression of the speaker's countenance, and that of the distinguished object of his rebuke. Order was not without difficulty restored; and when, at the termination of the splendid passage with which the orator concluded, he sunk back exhausted into his seat, the enthusiasm and applause broke forth anew, and continued without intermission for an unprecedented time.

Sir Robert Peel endeavoured, in his reply, to obliterate something of the effect which had been wrought upon the feelings of the House, by citing in retort, expressions which had fallen from Mr. O'Connell regarding the Duke of Wellington. These, he observed, it would be unfair in him to attempt to fix upon the whole Liberal party; but equally unjust, he argued, was it in Mr. Sheil to hold the Opposition accountable for every casual phrase that might fall

from each of its members. The analogy however, did not apply. No party in the Legislature had ever shown themselves wanting in sentiments of personal respect to the great soldier, nor could a dozen men have been found at any time who in their places in Parliament, and with a view to influence great acts of legislation, would sanction the application to him of an insulting epithet. Lord Lyndhurst's position was very different. Twice he had been keeper of the conscience of the King, and whenever a change of Ministry should occur his pre-eminent abilities as a judge, and unrivalled powers in debate in the Upper House, justified the expectation that he would probably again be chosen to fill the highest office of the State. Meanwhile, he had been put forward as the acknowledged leader of his party upon the question then at issue respecting Municipal Reform; and it was in the very act of giving the advice which his party had but too readily followed that the unhappy words, declaratory of the alienage of a whole people, had been pronounced. Lord Lyndhurst himself, far from shrinking from the responsibility of the course he had advised, when the bill was again sent up to the Peers, moved a postponement of its consideration

until other measures should be likewise before the House, in a speech which Lord Melbourne characterized as likely to be little less provocative of popular resentment in Ireland than that which he had delivered the previous year.* Indications were nevertheless observable in the tone adopted by Sir Robert Peel and the Duke of Wellington, of a willingness to yield upon the general principle of the measure, if a settlement could be come to on the Church question, and provided a test of rateability were applied by the establishment of a poor-law in Ireland.

The reverses of the British Legion in Spain became on more than one occasion the subject of debate during the session of 1837. The Opposition hardly affected to deny their sympathy for the cause of Don Carlos, whom their journals spoke of as "the legitimate King." A motion was made on the 18th of April, 1837, by Sir H. Hardinge, condemnatory of the conduct of Ministers in sanctioning the British Legion, and, by implication, the policy of the Quadruple Treaty, guaranteeing the constitutional thrones of the Peninsula. The subject enlisted many of the feelings to which Mr. Sheil was sensitively

* Debate in the Lords, 9th June, 1837.

alive. He liked speaking upon foreign questions, and entered with zeal into the discussion:—

"It may be asked, what concern have we with Spain? I answer by asking, what concern has Russia with Spain? What have Austria and Prussia to do with Spain? And if despots feel their interests so deeply involved in the form of government which she assumes, shall it be said that the people of this country ought to be indifferent to the extension of the principles from which England derives her power and her virtue? But putting considerations aside which may be regarded as vague and indefinite, look back a little at events which have happened within a few years, and we shall see how material it is to sustain British interests in the Peninsula, in order to countervail the great Northern Confederacy which is leagued against us. We shall see the consequences of neglecting liberty in Spain. In 1820 the constitution was proclaimed. At the council of the Congress at Verona, it was determined by Russia that it should be crushed. In 1823, under the influence and swayed by the counsels of the autocrat, the Duc d'Angoulême marched into Spain. It is notorious that he obtained possession of Spain as the trustee for Alexander, and was a mere instrument in the hands of the Czar. The ascendency of Russia was established, and she took advantage of her predominance over France: being sure that her dependent, bribed by the gift of Spain into acquiescence, would not join us, she fell on Turkey, crossed the Balkan in 1829, extorted the treaty of Adrianople, and laid the Sultan so utterly prostrate, that England in 1830 could not lift him into independence and dignity again. This is the simple narrative of incidents of which we yet feel the results: the transactions in the East were, beyond doubt, influenced by our original supineness; and it is the duty of British Ministers to endeavour to repair these errors, and to regain an influence through liberal institutions in the Peninsula."

He then defended the means which had been taken

to sustain the wavering fortunes of constitutionalism, and reminded the opposition that during their brief tenure of office in 1834-5, the Duke of Wellington and Sir Robert Peel had explicitly adopted and re-affirmed the principles of the Quadruple alliance. For the partial failure of the Legion neither the Government nor its commander was responsible; but the Parliament would become so if the moral effect of its continued presence in Spain seemed to be repudiated by Great Britain. But in truth, the question was not one of disappointment on the part of the gallant mover, for he complained quite as bitterly of the success of the Marines as of the repulse of the troops under General Evans:—

"It is alleged that the measures of the Government have not produced any good results. Try that allegation by this test. If those measures had not been adopted—if the Auxiliary Legion and the marines had not given their co-operation, what would have befallen the Spanish people? Do you not know, on Major Richardson's authority, that Bilboa would have been taken by assault? and would not the British seamen have seen from afar upon the main the Durango standard of Don Carlos floating from the castle of St. Sebastian? Take another test if you please it. Let me suppose this motion carried. If you carry the present motion—if you prevent any acknowledgment of the Legion—if you break the character of this force—if you withdraw the marines from the north coast of Spain (the importance and efficiency of whose services you cannot deny)—what will be the result? The courier who will convey the intelligence will

convey tidings of great joy to St. Petersburg, to Vienna, and to Berlin; and he will convey tidings of great dismay wherever men value the possession of freedom or pant for its enjoyment. It will palsy the arm of liberty in Spain. It will fill her heart with despair. A terrible revulsion will be produced; from Calpe to the Pyrenees the cry, 'We are betrayed by England!' will be heard, and over that nation which you will indeed have betrayed, Don Carlos will march, without an obstacle, to Madrid.

You cheer me in mockery—do you? Who are you that cheer me? Not your leaders—not the men who are placed conspicuously before me. They know, they feel, the impolicy of these rash manifestations. They profess horror at the atrocities of Don Carlos, and deprecate his triumph; but you that cheer me, disclose your hearts and exhibit the wishes by which your political conduct is determined. Cheer on—exult in the anticipated victories of despotism in Spain, and with your purpose let the people of England be made well acquainted. But, turning from you, I call upon the rest of the House, and to the British people beyond the House, to reflect upon the events which must follow the triumph of Don Carlos. Do you not know him? Do you stand in need of any illustrations of his character? What was it that befel Spain when the constitution was suppressed in 1823? Do you not think that Don Carlos will improve upon Ferdinand's example, and recollect what model was held out to him? Have we forgotten the massacre at Cadiz? Is Riego's blood effaced from our memories? Do you doubt that the same terrible career of remorseless, relentless vengeance will be pursued by the marble-hearted despot by whom such horrors have been already perpetrated? With whom, attended with what companionship, encompassed by what councillors did Don Carlos land in England? Did he not dare to set his foot upon our shores with Moreno, the murderer of Boyd and Torrijos, beside him? But what further evidence of his character and his propensities do we want, than his terrible Durango ordinance? I have heard it asked whether it be befitting that in Spain, the

theatre of so many of those exploits whose memory will be everlasting, the British flag should be lowered in discomfiture, and before mountain peasants British soldiers should give way? I feel the force of that question; but there is another which I venture to put to every man who hears me, and among all those that hear me—above all—to the gallant officer by whom this motion has been made. I invoke the same recollections—I appeal to the same glorious remembrances; and in the name of those scenes of which he was not only a witness, but in which he bore a part, of which he carries the honourable attestation about him, I ask whether it be befitting that in Spain—that in the country whose freedom was achieved by such prodigies of English valour, where so many of your fellow-soldiers, who fell beside you, lie buried—is it, I ask, befitting that in that land, consecrated as it is in the annals of England's glory, a terrible, remorseless, relentless despotism should be established, and that the throne which England saved should be filled by the purple tyrant whose arms have been steeped to the shoulders in the blood of your countrymen—not slain in the field of honourable combat, but when the heat of battle had passed, and its sweat had been wiped away—savagely and deliberately murdered? Their bones are bleaching on the Pyrenean snows—their blood cries out; and shall we, intrusted as we are by the British people with the honour and the just vengeance of our country—shall we, instead of flying to arms, facilitate the ascent to the throne of Spain of the guilty man by whom these outrages upon every law, divine and human, have been committed? Never! The people of this country are averse to wanton war; but where the honour of England is at stake, there is no consequence which they are not prepared to meet—no treasure which they are not ready to lavish—no hazard which they will not be found prompt to encounter."

Sir Henry Hardinge's motion was seconded by Sir Stratford Canning, to whose nomination as Ambas-

sador at St. Petersburg the Emperor Nicholas was known to have objected in terms sufficiently strong to induce the Government to forego their intention of sending him thither. "There is," said Mr. Sheil, "a practical antithesis in the right honourable gentleman; for while for the Emperor Nicholas he has no strong personal relish, he is not without some propensity to the adoption of a Sclavonian policy at Madrid." Upon a division there appeared a majority of thirty-six against the motion.

It has been truly said by one who listened from a distance to the strife of parties during this somewhat monotonous period of our Parliamentary annals, "that the speeches of Mr. Sheil were hailed as God-sends amidst the darkness of speeches in ordinary. One was constantly struck with the flashing wit and imagery of particular passages; with his escape out of certain prejudices of his own party by the natural tendency of the poetical feeling to universality; and with the curious additional effect given to his most potential passages by a sort of juvenile buoyancy and impulse, as though he retained an ever-fresh warrant of credibility, on occasions even where older fervour might have been doubted."*

* Letter from Mr. Leigh Hunt, 10th December, 1853.

His loud and vehement utterances received their fitting plaudits. His looks and gestures were appreciable by all. Though we cannot recal them, we can imagine something of the emotion they produced; but how much of the expressive by-play is lost? Who shall whisper for us the "asides," sometimes artistically preconcerted—often the offspring of sudden impulse—lesser, but not less lustrous, sparkles of that light that comes not but in the irresistible concurrence of thought and passion.

He was now at the zenith of his reputation as a Parliamentary speaker, and with the exception of Lord Stanley, he might be fairly said to be without an oratorical rival in the House of Commons. Mr. Macaulay was still absent in India, and the powers of suasion and invective, by which others have subsequently become distinguished, were as yet comparatively undeveloped and unknown. "It is all acting," was the muttered cavil of those who possessed neither the ideality nor the susceptibility requisite to sympathise with the man whose fame and popularity they envied. "How can so much fervour be genuine, yet under such entire command? He must assuredly be acting."

It is curious to observe how closely the sneer of

modern envy resembles in form the brilliant, though bitter sarcasm, directed by Demosthenes against his illustrious rival, its life and lustre being lost in the literal translation. Æschines had in early days been a player, and brought with him, when he entered the popular assembly, many of the arts and accomplishments of a profession, of whose recollections he was suspected of having grown ashamed. At this chink in his adversary's intellectual armour, the wit of Demosthenes was mischievously aimed. When he could not otherwise disparage or displace the fine sentiments of his competitor, uttered as they were with faultless elocution, he exclaimed "You act," thus turning to account the double meaning of the word* used by the Greeks to designate dramatic recitation, as well as the unworthy simulation of feelings and opinions not really entertained by the speaker; but so little was the victor of The Crown disposed to undervalue the subtle and resistless power of artistic declamation, that when asked what was the chief requisite for oratorical success, his answer consisted in the reiteration of the very selfsame term, "acting,"† which in another form he had sarcastically applied to

* Υποχριτες. Step. Thes.

† Υποχρισις. The representation of a part upon the stage.

Æschines. The word is commonly mis-translated "action," which renders the passage valueless, if not unmeaning.

The same charge was often made against the elder Pitt; and in the celebrated conflict between him and Horace Walpole, the latter did not disdain to accuse him of endeavouring to beguile his hearers by "theatrical emotion." The imputation with its double edge seems to have touched the haughty sensibility of the "great commoner" to the quick, and drew from him the most ruthless and scathing retort which the records of Parliamentary invective, perhaps, contain. But even in his rage he critically discriminates between the justifiable use of pre-considered gesture and intonation, and the unworthy "utterance of any other sentiments than his own." To any comment on the former he avows his contemptuous disregard; while for the insinuation of the latter he declares his unmeasured indignation and resentment. Grattan, who had often in his youth heard Chatham speak, and who is believed to have in some degree modelled his own style upon that illustrious example, was constantly reproached with affecting the air and manner of the stage; but he treated at all times such comments with indifference or derision, attributing them to

ignorance or jealousy in those who made them. He used to tell an anecdote of Flood, *apropos* of this subject. At the conclusion of an elaborate attack upon the ministry by that formidable assailant, one of their empty and flippant retainers was put up to reply to him; and by way of disparaging the force of splendid imagery and grave invective with which the Commons had been carried away, the apologist of the Treasury Bench began by declaring that *he* would not try to mislead the House by the use of exalted phrases—he would not try to delude them by dramatic pauses—he would not try to influence them by theatrical intonation; and he was beginning another reiteration of what he would not *try* to do, when Flood scornfully ejaculated, "Try, sir—do try!" the ludicrous effect of which was irresistible. This story was told by Lord Plunket to Sheil, when talking of the men who were most distinguished in the Irish Parliament.

CHAPTER XVIII.

1837—1840.

The Queen's Accession—Commissionership of Greenwich Hospital —Personal anecdotes—Appropriation clause abandoned— Debate on the Government of Ireland—The Jamaica Bill— Ministerial changes—Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade —Dinner to Mr. Byng—Government patronage—Personal characteristics—Lord Stanley's Registration Bill.

At the general election occasioned by the demise of the Crown, no important change in the balance of parties occurred. In England the Conservatives gained; but this was countervailed by their losses in Scotland and in Ireland. In the latter country, the fusion of the different sections of the Liberal party appeared to be complete. The administrative government, for the first time since the Union, was conducted upon the principles laid down by Mr. Fox, in

1797. "My wish," said that eminent statesman, "is, that the whole people of Ireland should have the same privileges, the same system, the same operation of government; and although it may be only a subordinate consideration, that all classes should have an equal chance of emolument—in other words, I would have the Irish government regulated by Irish notions and Irish prejudices; and I am convinced, the more Ireland is under Irish government, the more she will be bound to English interests." To those principles Lord John Russell stated that he gave his unqualified adhesion,* and in a letter addressed by him to Lord Mulgrave, soon after the Queen's accession, he conveyed to the viceroy the strongest expressions of her Majesty's commendation, her entire approval of the principles on which the recent administration of affairs in Ireland had been carried on, and the cordial expression of her desire "to see her Irish subjects in the full enjoyment of that civil and political equality, to which, by a recent statute, they were entitled; and that she was convinced, that when invidious distinctions were altogether obliterated, her throne would be more secure, and the people more truly united." A new era thus seemed

* Debate on Irish Municipal Reform, 7th February, 1837.

to be inaugurated. The fatal chain, by which liberty and loyalty had long been bound together in men's thoughts as antagonistic and incompatible, was broken, and the shout at the hustings was everywhere, "the Queen, and justice to Ireland." Many severe contests took place, but generally with results favourable to the popular cause. Mr. Sheil and Mr. Otway Cave were opposed in Tipperary, but both were returned by a great majority; the numbers being, for Mr. Sheil, 1557; Mr. Cave, 1544; Mr. Barker, 642; and Mr. Moore, 633.

The new parliament met in November, to settle the Civil List for the youthful Sovereign; and having performed that duty, adjourned till February. In the interval, the first proposition connected with office was made to Mr. Sheil. So long as William the Fourth lived, an insuperable barrier existed to his attainment of office. Like his predecessor, the King deemed himself bound to cherish a fraternal resentment against the man who had ventured to trifle with the sufferings of the Duke of York. The lapse of ten years, and all the changes that in that period had occurred, were not sufficient to obliterate from the royal mind the memory of that miserable affront. This at least, was the only assigned cause. But soon after the

Queen's accession to the throne, it was felt by many of his friends, that as no obstacle of the kind adverted to, any longer existed, some office of distinction ought to be placed at his disposal. Lord John Russell wrote to Lord Melbourne, suggesting that he should ascertain what his views as to office were. The premier did so, asking him if he still looked for professional advancement. He said, No, that he had very much forgotten his law, and would prefer political or other office. On learning this, Lord John proposed that he should have the clerkship of the Ordnance, saying "that although he might have forgotten his law, he was certainly well up to working the guns." Some delay however intervened, and the commissionership of Greenwich Hospital fell vacant. It certainly was hardly worthy of his acceptance; but he had often expressed an anxiety to have something for life, as his income was chiefly dependent on that of Mrs. Sheil, and under the impression that it was permanent and compatible with parliament, Lord Melbourne offered it to him. In the conversation which took place upon the occasion, Sheil said he preferred it on this account to the clerkship of the Ordnance, although he added, laughing, the salary is not very splendid. Lord Melbourne

replied that "600*l.* a-year was a very good thing, and 300*l.* a-year was a very good thing: Sir Henry Parnell used to boast that he lived upon 200*l.* a-year, and lived like a gentleman." After some consideration he made up his mind to accept the proffered post; and having thereby vacated his seat, a new writ was moved for the county of Tipperary, as soon as the House re-assembled in February. The overwhelming demonstration made in his favour at the recent election, deterred his former antagonists from repeating their costly and useless experiment; and he was returned for the fourth time for the county, on this occasion, without any opposition.*

His acceptance of this appointment was much disapproved of by many of his warmest friends. When Mr. Woulfe heard of it, he exclaimed, "It is an act that those who love and value Sheil as he deserves, never can forgive him." To those who depreciated and disliked him, it furnished occasion for many an ill-natured comment and witless sneer. The populace in Ireland were told to regard it as a proof of his want of political independence; while the supercilious of a different class in England, affected to regard the smallness of the place as an admission of the low

* March, 1838.

value at which the man was held by himself and by his ministerial friends. But was this just? His position, though at the time one of celebrity and ease, was one essentially precarious. For parliament he had virtually abandoned the law, in which, had he adhered to it with the mercenary views so unfairly ascribed to him, he might easily have secured lucrative and eminent station. The discerning multitude never found fault with any of his professional cotemporaries for using the House of Commons as a mere occasional side-path of their own ambition, and for continuing to plod their profitable way to the Bench, without troubling themselves about the fortunes of their party or their country. During the whole period of the Melbourne administration, parties were so balanced that the energy and zeal of an individual supporter might, at any moment, make all the difference between its maintenance and its overthrow. Sheil not only gave his votes whenever votes were of consequence, and the force of his brilliant eloquence whenever it was required, but he devoted continually his time and thoughts in private, to the sustainment of that policy which in public he espoused. His earnestness in conversation, his watchfulness regarding passing events, his promptitude in communicating at

the earliest moment whatever it was most important for his correspondents at a distance to know,—these and an infinite variety of the minor duties of partisanship constantly occupied his mind. It is mere ignorance only of the working of political party, that throws its head in the air, and affects to doubt the worth of services like these. That they were not doubted in the case in question, by those who had opportunities of observing them, is incontestable; and had he who rendered them unostentatiously, sought to turn his position to what, in the language of trading politicians is commonly termed "good account," he might certainly have exchanged a life of uncertainty and excitement, for one of affluence and ease. In truth, however, that which he desired most, was neither wealth nor tranquillity; his highest sense of pleasure was in the exercise of that rare faculty by which the breathless attention of the House of Commons is enchained. "That," he used to say, "that is power. Cheers are nothing; any one who is reckless enough to play for them, if he has common tact and ability, can win them. I don't care for cheers; the thing that is hard to catch, and when caught, to hold, is the silent attention of the House. When you have done that you have succeeded; not till then."

But the talisman by which this influence can be exercised, was liable he well knew to be at any moment lost; and he anxiously desired to possess some permanent provision which would secure to him an honourable competence in failing health or declining years. And the senseless charge brought against him is this, that he preferred remaining in parliament with a right to hold a small and comparatively obscure office to gambling for the higher and uncertain prizes of the state, or sinking into silent and luxurious repose. The long struggle of his youth with niggard fortune, had left an indelible impress on his mind. "The high-born and opulent," he would sometimes say, "are incapable of realizing the misery and humiliation to which a man of education and of feeling is exposed, when he has to gamble with his wits for the price of a dinner. But who that has passed through the ordeal can forget it? For myself I have never been able to get the chill of early poverty out of my bones."

He could not resist however the provocatives to mirth which the new and strange associations wherewith he was surrounded, daily presented; and, as was his wont, he did not hesitate to fix the point of his joke upon himself, while he ascribed the humour to

another. When his appointment to Greenwich Hospital was attacked in the Opposition journals of the day, as being unsuitable, he insisted upon attributing to Mr. Fonblanque the ludicrous argument in its defence, "that though not actually maimed, he was decidedly crippled by the gout, which was nearly as bad as any gun-shot wound, and might fairly be regarded as the next best qualification."

Ministers and their antagonists in Parliament had alike grown weary of the fruitless conflict that had now for three years been maintained regarding legislative measures for Ireland. In the Commons a preponderance of opinion still prevailed in favour of assimilating corporate privileges in all parts of the kingdom, and of appropriating the surplus of Church revenues to secular objects. A greater preponderance of opinion in the Peers lay the other way. Unless some terms of compromise could be found, there seemed to be no chance of legislative progress, or of escape from the dilemma. The offers which had been thrown out by the Opposition leaders at the close of the preceding session, were construed by Lord Melbourne and his colleagues to signify their willingness to acquiesce in a Municipal Bill, provided the Tithe question were adjusted, without the condition an-

nexed of "Appropriation." The attainment of the former it was felt would be a great and immediate good, while the latter was at best but the assertion of a theoretic principle, the practical results of which no one could pretend were likely to become appreciable for some time. Ministers and their Irish supporters in Parliament concurred therefore, in desiring that the substantial benefit should be secured by the sacrifice of the shibboleth of their party. Some of the English Radicals indeed, demurred, and loud reproaches were cast by the Tories on their rivals for consenting to the terms they themselves had urged upon their acceptance. They even hoped to be able to bear away in triumph the flag which had thus been lowered; and on the 14th of May, Sir Thomas Acland moved that the resolutions of the 6th and 7th of April, 1835, pledging the House to "Appropriation," should be rescinded. Lord John Russell at once declared that such a proceeding far exceeded the scope and tenour of the understanding to which he had been prepared to come, and that in a condition so humiliating he could never as a minister acquiesce. He avowed that in having been lured into proposing a bill for the settlement of tithes, without embodying the provision for which he had heretofore contended,

he had been outwitted; he would not upon that account swerve from the prudent, though somewhat painful course he deemed it his duty to take, but taught by experience, he should in future feel "that whenever his opponents made professions, he must consider those professions as snares; that whenever they made declarations, he should consider those declarations as stratagems, and intended to deceive." The House rejected the proposition of Sir Thomas Acland, by 317 to 298; and the bill for the conversion of tithes into a rent charge, passed rapidly through both Houses.

But when the other portion of the compromise came to be considered, new difficulties and delays arose. The general right of Ireland to municipal self-government was indeed no longer questioned; but Sir Robert Peel refused to assent to any lower franchise than that of a ten pound rated value, and in committee moved that such should be substituted for the five pound franchise named in the bill. This was rejected by 286 to 266. But Lord Lyndhurst having induced the Lords to adopt the higher franchise, the Commons disagreed, and the bill was again lost.

Throughout these proceedings the name of Mr. Sheil frequently occurs. At first he was exceedingly

averse to the abandonment of the Appropriation clause, with which he felt himself to be one of those who were most identified in public estimation. But when reluctantly convinced of the futility of persevering in its reiteration in the then temper of the public mind in England, and of the policy of removing the sole pretext for the continued refusal of civic rights to the inhabitants of Irish towns, he entered cordially into the course agreed upon, and contributed by his personal exertions to prevent discord and division in the popular ranks.

Next session opened with a renewal of the struggle for Irish Municipal Reform. Rumours prevailed that among the Conservatives, several persons of independent judgment and station had begun to entertain misgivings as to the justice and expediency of the policy advocated by their chiefs, upon this and other questions affecting Ireland. Lord Eliot, Mr. Milner Gibson, Mr. Baring Wall, and several others no longer concealed their change of opinions, and voted for the unmutilated bill.

After he had held the Commissionership of Greenwich Hospital for nearly twelve months, an intimation was made to him from Sir Robert Peel, or rather perhaps from those who acted with the sanction of

his name in the party of which he was the head, that if they came into power they would not consider the appointment as permanent; for that although when it had been conferred on persons unconnected with, or retired from politics, the rule had been not to make any change, the case was obviously different where the office was filled by an able and active partisan. In this it must be confessed there was some fairness, and Mr. Sheil felt that he had been treated by the Opposition with candour and consideration.

A Committee of inquiry into the state of crime in Ireland during the Vice-royalty of Lord Normanby, was moved for in the Upper House by Lord Roden on the 21st March. The terms of condemnation of the Irish executive in which the motion was sustained, rendered it impossible to regard it otherwise than as a vote of censure. It was accordingly resisted, though unavailingly, by Lord Melbourne, who upon a division found himself in a minority of five. Much exultation was publicly expressed by the organs and partisans of the Opposition, and a corresponding sense of disheartenment spread among the friends of Ministers. When Parliament resumed after the Easter holidays, Ministers resolved to appeal from the judgment of the Peers to that of

the representatives of the people. On the 8th of April, Lord J. Russell gave notice that on the 15th instant he would move the following resolution:—"That it is the opinion of this House that it is expedient to persevere in those principles which have guided the executive Government of Ireland of late years, and which have tended to the effectual administration of the laws and the general improvement of that part of the United Kingdom." The next day Sir R. Peel gave notice of his intention to move an amendment to the effect that such a declaratory resolution of approval was neither called for nor justified by the circumstances of an appointment by the other House of a Committee of Inquiry.* The discussion upon these rival resolutions began on the 15th of April, and lasted five nights. The chief speakers on the one side were, Lord J. Russell, Mr. Spring Rice, Mr. Grote, Sir E. L. Bulwer, Mr. D. R. Pigot, Lord Morpeth, Mr. O'Connell, Mr. Hume, and Mr. Sheil: on the other, Sir R. Peel, Mr. Emerson Tennant, Mr. Sydney Herbert, Mr. F. Shaw, and Sir J. Graham. The whole system of lenity in the execution of the laws, and of political and religious conciliation pursued by the Government in Ireland

* Hansard, 12th April, 1839.

was condemned as undignified and impolitic by the Opposition; and defended as wise, just, and successful by those whose conduct was impugned. The language of the Ministerial Leader and of the Irish Secretary was especially fearless and defiant. They would not be satisfied with the involuntary forbearance for which their opponents affected to take credit in not proposing a direct vote of censure in that House. "They had deserved well of their country," said Lord Morpeth, "for the manner in which they had governed Ireland, and upon that issue he called on the representatives of the empire to come to the vote." Towards the close of the debate Mr. Sheil rose, and after a rapid review of the principal speeches, for each of which he had some appropriate foot-note by way of ironical illustration, he earnestly remonstrated against the system of dealing with questions of such moment in arguments "infinite in length though infinitesimal in detail." The social plight in which Ireland had been left by past Governments, and the broad features of the existing one, were all that was really worthy of investigation. When the history of their time should be written, little account would be taken of the matters that had formed the staple of the accusations against Lord

Normanby. The historian would have regard to the long accumulation of provocation, causes of disorder and crime arising out of centuries of misrule. How would Sir R. Peel have felt if a Committee had been appointed to inquire into all the offences and outrages perpetrated from 1812 to 1818, the period during which he had filled the office of Secretary for Ireland? Or in what light would he have regarded the appointment of such a Committee if demanded in a party spirit, with every imputation of party responsibility, and with an avowed intention of casting party blame?

"It is not my intention to enter into any inquiry, founded on the numerous authorities which might be cited on the subject, of the causes of the long-continued perpetration of crime in Ireland. I shall content myself with one; and I refer to it solely because it exhibits a singular coincidence of opinion at the distance of three hundred years, between two Englishmen officially employed in Ireland. Repeated allusion has been made in the course of this debate to the letter addressed by Mr. Drummond to the magistrates of the county of Tipperary. I hold in my hand a volume of the State Papers of the year 1535. Brabazon, writing to Cromwell in that year, says that the crimes of the lower orders arise exclusively from the cruelty and extortion of the proprietors of the soil. He adds, that a just Government would soon raise Ireland to a level in civilization with this country. From that remote time it would be easy to present to the House a series of authorities reaching down to the present day, in which a singular concurrence in that sentiment

would be found; but citations in this House are not calculated to excite much attention; and, indeed, upon the causes of our calamitous criminality, such citations are superfluous. Instead of its being wonderful that in Ireland, disastrous outrage should have prevailed so long, it would be astonishing if it had been otherwise. If any other country had been governed as you have governed us, would not the results have been the same as are presented to you by the island which has been so long subject to your dominion, and for whose guilt, as well as for whose misfortunes, it ought to occur to you that you should be held responsible? Take any country you please—take the country, for example, of the honourable gentleman opposite, the member for Kilmarnock, who is taking notes of what I am uttering, with a view, I suppose, to reply to me. I will furnish him with materials for a reply, by inquiring from him, and every other Scotch gentleman who does me the honour to attend to me, what would have been the fate of their country if the same policy had been pursued in its regard as was adopted towards the unfortunate island whose condition, social, moral, and political, affords you so much ground for lamentation? If Scotland (which has made a progress so signal in prosperity of all kinds—and which, with so many claims to praise, possesses, in what Burns has nobly called her 'virtuous populace,' the chief title to admiration)—if Scotland, I say, had been portioned out by the sword of military rapine among merciless adventurers—if, after the work of robbery was done, a code for the debasement of the Presbyterian population had been enacted—if the Presbyterians of Scotland had not only been despoiled of property, but deprived of all power to acquire it—if they had been shut out of every honourable employment, and debarred from every creditable pursuit—if they had been spoliated of every political franchise, deprived of education, and reduced to a state of vassalage, compared to which feudal serfship would be one of dignity and of honour—and if all these legislative atrocities had been perpetrated under the pretence of maintaining an Episcopal Establishment amongst

a degraded Calvinistic people, have you a doubt—has any Scotchman a doubt—has the member for Kilmarnock (he is the only representative of a Scotch burgh who takes part against us)—has even the member for Kilmarnock a doubt that, even long after that system had been partially abolished, Scotland would present the same spectacle as Ireland now exhibits, and to Tory orators would afford as wide and desolate a field for their mournful expatiation? Inquire, forsooth, into the state of Ireland since 1835! Since 1835! No, sir; but from the day on which, to rapacity, to cruelty, to degradation, to the oppression by which the wise are maddened, our wretched island was surrendered. From that day to this hour let your inquiry be extended; and when that inquiry shall have terminated, you will learn that it is not at the door of Lord Normanby that Irish atrocities are to be laid, but that they should be deposited at your fathers' graves; and that their guilt, in a long inheritance of sin, should descend upon you. It is in the history—in every page of the history—of Ireland, that the causes of her excesses are to be sought; and whoever shall read that history with the spirit in which it ought to be perused, will cry 'Shame!' upon the men who avail themselves of the crimes inevitably incidental to the condition of the people, in order to raise a clamour against the Government, to rouse the religious passions of this country, and to turn the old 'No Popery' cry to a political account."

He thus concluded a long and comprehensive retrospect of the evils that had been caused at various periods by the resorting for party purposes to the "No Popery" cry.

"You talk to us of collision with the Lords. Of collision with millions of your fellow-citizens beware; beware of collision with those millions to whom a power has been imparted which in your hearts you know you can never recal. If the member for

Tamworth, on the first night of this debate, cautioned us with any truth to beware of 'entrance in a quarrel,' with how much more justice should he himself be warned to avoid a contention with those of whose prowess he has already had an experience so instructive! Such a contention would not be wise. What do I say, wise? it would not be safe, and its consequences might be disastrous beyond what it may be prudential to point out. It is not to Ireland alone that those consequences would be confined; they would extend far beyond her; and every British interest would be affected by them. 'We are at war,' exclaims the Duke of Wellington, 'in America and in Asia.' If we are at war in America, this is not the time to hand Ireland over to the rule of that party who, between Catholics and Protestants, between Irishmen and Englishmen, would draw 'the boundary line.' We are indeed at war in Asia, and disclosures have recently been made respecting the views and feelings of Russia in regard to this country which must convince us that the peace of Europe is more than insecure. With respect to France, is it not manifest that, if the Tories had been in office two months ago, and had acted on the principles which they profess in opposition, we should have been hurried into a war with France by the blockade of Mexico? Algiers remains as a ground of difference; and, independently of these considerations, France itself is in a state so volcanic—a concussion and an eruption are so probable—that upon any permanent alliance with that country it would be rashness to rely.

This, then, is not the time—this is not the befitting time—in the heart of the Britith empire, amidst two-thirds of the population of these islands—in place of that sentiment of impassioned allegiance which Lord Normanby succeeded in creating, to substitute a feeling of deep, resentful, and perilous discontent; to convert Ireland into a source of your weakness, from a bulwark of your strength; to make her an item in the calculations of your antagonists, and to the external risks by which we are encompassed, to superadd this fearful domestic hazard. These

are reflections which will not be lightly dismissed by you, if to the modern name by which your party desires to be designated you have any claim."

A majority of twenty-two decided in favour of the original resolution and against the amendment of Sir R. Peel.

While this majority seemed to confer on the Melbourne Cabinet a new lease of power, their defeat a few days afterwards on the Jamaica Government Bill brought their existence to a sudden and unlooked-for close. The Colonial Legislature, which had long been at variance with the Governor and the home authorities on the manner in which Negro Emancipation was to be carried into effect, had recently gone the length of denouncing in no measured terms an Act for the regulation of prisons, passed almost unanimously by Parliament in 1838, and the absolute necessity of which, as a check upon local abuse and oppression, few were in England hardy enough to deny. By this enactment however the last remnant of the old tyrannic power of the planters who formed the Assembly was taken away, and their collective dignity mortally wounded. They passed resolutions refusing to perform their legislative functions, and thus endeavoured to suspend all constitu-

tional authority in the island at the critical moment when the coloured population were in the first exultation of manumission. The case was urgent, and a bill was accordingly prepared, suspending the oligarchic constitution of the colony for five years, and vesting all legislative power *ad interim* in the Governor and Council, assisted by three special Commissioners appointed by the Crown, in order that time should be afforded for the maturing a new and popular form of rule, which should be inaugurated when the perilous period of social transition should have elapsed. On the 9th of April, this measure was introduced by the Under-Secretary for the Colonies, Mr. Labouchere; and on the 23rd of April it was read a second time without any serious opposition. But on going into Committee, on the 3rd of May, Sir R. Peel stated that, upon full consideration, he felt bound to resist its further progress as an unwarrantable interference by the Supreme Legislature with the constitutional rights and privileges of an ancient dependency. The conduct and language of the Colonial Assembly he could not defend, but great allowance ought to be made for the summary manner in which they had been dealt with; and no actual necessity had been shown for so arbitrary a change as that proposed. Mr. Gladstone and Lord

Stanley followed in a similar strain, and were answered by Mr. Charles Buller, Sir George Grey, Dr. Lushington, Mr. O'Connell, and Lord J. Russell, all of whom argued that some vigorous measure of an exceptional character was indispensable if the Act of Emancipation was to be safely and fully executed in Jamaica. The House divided, and there appeared but 294 in favour of going into committee, while 289 recorded their votes against it. This amounted to a defeat of the Bill, and Ministers in consequence resigned.*

After a brief interval, Lord Melbourne was recalled to power, Sir Robert Peel having declined to accept the Premiership unless all the principal appointments in the Household, including those held by ladies, were placed at his disposal. A modified Jamaica Bill was introduced, on which a good deal of discussion arose. Although the party interest of the question had passed away, several of the details were canvassed sharply. In one of the debates which took place upon the remodelled bill, Mr. Sheil appears to have taken part without much previous consideration. The House, already out of humour, and disappointed at the absence of the brilliant antitheses and lucid condensa-

* 7th May, 1839.

tion of arguments previously used by others, which they were accustomed to from him, grew impatient, and after a little time disorderly. A cry from one of the back benches of "time" being caught up and repeated, intimated to him that he was suspected of speaking rather to occupy a critical half-hour of the evening than from any conviction of his own that he had new reasons to urge in support of the bill. For a while he strove to stem the current, but it was in vain. That which has at times befallen every man, however eminent or popular in the House of Commons, since the days of Burke, but which no man more rarely encountered than he did, awaited him: he was compelled to resume his seat amid a buzz of inattention, in which he was unable to make himself intelligibly heard. This sort of reception was new to him; but he was little disconcerted, and ascribed it altogether to want of preparation. "I made a devilish bad speech last night," he said, on meeting a friend the following day. "I was not present," was the rejoinder; "but it reads very well." "No, no, it was a bad speech—very bad," he said; "but, no matter, I must only take care to make a good one next time."

Not many days after, he succeeded in effacing the

memory of this failure by the part he took in a discussion upon Mr. Grote's motion for the Ballot. The occasion promised more than ordinary interest from the circumstance that it was the first upon which the right of voting in the affirmative on the question was exercised by a member of the Cabinet; and it was further rendered noteworthy by the re-appearance in debate of Mr. Macaulay, who had lately returned from India. The newly-elected member for Edinburgh showed, by reference to Parliamentary history, that under Mr. Pitt and other celebrated statesmen subjects of the gravest moment, such as Reform, Slavery Abolition, and the conduct of Warren Hastings, had been treated as open questions. He had always understood that when the Act of 1832 was passed, the Ballot had been expressly reserved for future consideration; and he conceived that the full recognition of it as one of the matters on which every member of the Government might vote as he deemed right, was eminently calculated to raise its character and influence in the country. These views were dissented from by Lord Howick and Sir R. Peel. They were sustained and enforced by Mr. Sheil, who cited the admission publicly made by Lord Durham, that in the alternative projects of Reform submitted to the

Cabinet in 1831, the Ballot and the limitation of Parliaments to a term of five years had been included.

The motion was rejected by 335 to 217. Mr. Poulett Thomson was the only Cabinet Minister who voted with Mr. Grote; four voted against him—viz., Lord J. Russell, Lord Palmerston, Mr. S. Rice, and Lord Howick, and two stayed away. In the minority were found seventeen members of the Government, and in the majority but twelve.

On the 24th of June, Lord John Russell, who had resumed the Leadership of the Commons, brought forward a proposal for a grant of 30,000*l.* for purposes of national education in Great Britain. The scheme for the application of this grant had been debated on a previous occasion and affirmed by a majority of only five. Lord Mahon raised the discussion anew by an amendment, intended to assert the indispensability of religious instruction in any system of national education. Mr. Sheil replied to a speech of Sir George Clark, who with several others argued that the omission of religious teaching in schools supported by the State tended to the undermining of the Established Church.

"But how comes it," he asked, "that we for ever hear the expression of such fears for the stability of the Church of Eng-

land? Why are you for ever crying out that your church is in danger from popery and giving way to the most fantastic fears? What makes you so much afraid? You have nothing in reality to fear, armed as you are, I presume, in innocence, from any cause, much less from the education of the unhappy popish poor. Your church is incorporated with the State, supported by the interests of the higher orders, and by the faith of the humbler classes. In the midst of Court and Parliament it lifts its mitred head. It possesses vast revenues. It rules over the two most famous universities in the world; it presides over the great patrician seminaries of the land; it has retained all the pomp, pride and glorious circumstances of the Establishment, of which it is a perpetuation,—archbishops, bishops, archdeacons, deans, cathedrals, chapters, golden stalls,—it is distinguished by a prelacy eminent for learning, and what is more important, distinguished by the activity, the energy and the spirit of organised confederacy among the parochial clergy. Such is your Establishment. And can you bring yourselves to believe that such a fabric, based on the national belief and towering amidst aristocratic sustainment, can be prostrated on the rock on which you believe it to be raised—not by foreign invasion—not by intestine commotion—not by a great moral concussion—but by a discharge of Douay Testaments and popish missals from the hands of a set of shoeless, shirtless, popish paupers gathered under the command of the Privy Council, from the lanes of Liverpool, the alleys of Manchester and of Salford, or the receptacles of St. Giles's? This ague of apprehension for your church is idle, and would be ridiculous but for the fatal results which it produces and the constant injustice which it works. Take for an example the noble member for Dorset, who is so remarkable for the benevolent concern he feels for the poor factory children. It does credit to his heart that he should feel so deep a sympathy for those unfortunate beings who, in the spring of life, in the season when, if ever, joy should break out of the heart, are immured in those dismal fabrics dedicated to the insatiable genius

of gain. How often and how eloquently had the noble Lord expatiated on the moral destitution to which these poor children were reduced. But alas! what a contrast he presents the instant the prerogatives of the Church are touched! his sensibility at once evaporates. To the imaginary hazards of the Establishment, he immolates the interests of thousands and thousands of helpless beings, and refuses to stretch forth his hand to raise them from the depths of ignorance and depravity in which they are immersed! Has the noble Lord ever been in that part of this vast metropolis in which Irish emigration is chiefly deposited? Has he ever traversed that melancholy district in which at every step the eye, the ear, the heart—every physical and moral sense is shocked? Has he ever looked down into those recesses in which hordes of miserable children are accumulated in heaps of wretchedness? Or has he ever looked up to the dwellings which swarm with diseased vitality, and through sashless windows seen the face of squalid, vacant, emaciated childhood staring with the glare of ignorance and misery upon him? If he were to observe and become familiar with such spectacles, his own righteous habits of mind would give way, his natural emotions would get the better of his prejudices, and he would feel that true religion, which is identified with charity and with mercy, imperatively required on the part of the Legislature that some effort should be made for the instruction of those unfortunate creatures.

I have heard much (concluded Mr. Sheil), in the course of the discussion, of the dogmas of theology. I do not profess to be conversant with them; but I sometimes read the Bible, in every page of which the lessons of mercy are so admirably inculcated; and it strikes me if there be a passage in which the character of our Saviour is described in a peculiarly amiable light, it is that in which he is represented as desiring his disciples not to forbid little children to come unto him. I think, I cannot help thinking, that if among the little group on whose heads he was invoked to lay his hands, there had been the child of a Sadducee

or a Samaritan, the God of mercy and of love would not have put the little schismatic aside. Do not imitate the example of those by whom the children were rebuked; suffer them to approach him; let them have access to the sources of pure morality, and of the truth which is common to all Christians. Do not close the avenues to that knowledge which leads to happiness when 'time shall be no more;' and instead of engaging in acrimonious contentions about ecclesiastical prerogatives and pretensions, let us act on the precept contained in the divine injunction, 'Suffer little children to come unto me and forbid them not, for of such is the kingdom of heaven.'"

Mr. Goulburn replied, and the vote was carried on a division by a majority of only two.

At the close of the session several changes took place in the constitution of the Government. Lord John Russell became Secretary for the Colonies, while Lord Normanby replaced him in the Home Office. Mr. Francis Baring succeeded Mr. Spring Rice as Chancellor of the Exchequer; and Mr. Labouchere took the place of Mr. Poulett Thomson (created Lord Sydenham) as President of the Board of Trade. Lords Clarendon and Morpeth were added to the Cabinet, as well as Mr. Macaulay, who was appointed Secretary at War in the room of Lord Howick, who retired. Mr. More O'Ferrall succeeded Mr. Charles Wood as Secretary of the Admiralty, and Mr. Sheil was appointed Vice-President of the Board of Trade.*

* 29th August, 1839.

One of his most successful speeches out of Parliament was that delivered at a dinner to Mr. Byng, given on the 11th of March, 1840, to celebrate the completion by the veteran Reformer of the fifteenth year during which he represented the county of Middlesex. Many of the leading members of both Houses assisted at the banquet, which took place in Drury-lane Theatre. Amongst other toasts given were—"The people the source of legitimate power," by the Duke of Bedford; and "The Liberal Members of the House of Commons," proposed by the Marquis of Headfort. The duty of acknowledging the latter devolved on Mr. Sheil. "We happened to meet at Brookes' in the course of the afternoon," says one of those who were on most familiar terms with him; "and as he proposed walking to the dinner, I resolved to accompany him, for it was easy to see that he was much too absorbed to be very well qualified to take care of himself through the cab-shoals and narrow currents of the way. On our arrival his seat was pointed out to him near the chair; but this he did not like, and chose instead one immediately under the arch that spans the chord of the orchestra." He feared that if he spoke from the centre of the vast arena he would be unable to make himself distinctly

heard without unduly raising the pitch of his voice, whereas the position he selected was, he well knew, the easiest to speak from. The result answered his expectations fully. Without apparent effort every syllable was distinctly audible in all parts of the house; and many passages in his address drew forth enthusiastic bursts of plaudits.

For many years he was constantly beset with solicitations to use his influence to procure situations and favours of various kinds from Government. Many an applicant, who sought in vain to enlist the sympathy of others on whom they had much stronger claims, found in him a zealous and disinterested friend, and what often seemed to them still more surprising, a prompt and candid one. His abhorrence of cant and ceremony led him to direct these official suitors to be admitted to an interview when they sometimes least expected it; and before a word of the usual empty preface about "hesitation in asking," and "long services," and "respectable connexions," could be uttered, he would interpose with—"Well, I have read your letter of introduction from Mr. ——, and I have no doubt of your qualifications; I will do everything I can for you; I don't know whether I'll succeed or not, but I intend to try; I think you

have claims, and I mean to urge them." Then would commence a confused stream of professions of gratitude and promises of attachment on behalf of friends and kinsfolk, all which were to him ineffably wearisome, so he generally cut them short with some question about the state of the locality whence the memorialist had come; and if he found there was no information worth having to be thus obtained, he would move towards the door, saying good-humouredly that he had business to attend to, and that when he knew the result of the application, his visitor should hear from him. One day a young man called on him with a recommendation from a particular friend; he happened to be engrossed with other thoughts at the time, and seemed hardly conscious of the long detail of acquisitions and capabilities which were recited in the hope of creating in his mind a favourable opinion. In the middle of a somewhat difficult passage, intended no doubt to prove peculiar efficiency in trigonometrical surveying, Sheil abruptly asked, "Of what religion are you?" The youth, who was from the north of Ireland, intimated in a disconcerted tone that he had been brought up a Presbyterian, while the painful suspicion darkened his hopes that he was in the presence of one

with whom creed weighed more than algebra or geometry. Great was his wonder and relief at the rejoinder—"I am very glad of it, for we shall have so much the less difficulty in accomplishing what you want. Now I am very busy; I shall write at once, and you may call again this day fortnight."

He attached little belief to the profession of those in public station who said that they never could get anything for a friend. "They are not sincere," he would say, "or they do not go about it in the right way. When I ask, my words are few and decided. I call on the person proper to be spoken to. I come at once to the point by saying such a place is vacant, and I want it for my friend. I then add this is a thing that ought to be done, and take my departure. When a man acts thus he is known to be in earnest, and is seldom disappointed."

Upon the other hand no man was more apt to give a direct and unconditional refusal when he deemed the application unreasonable, or felt that there was little likelihood of his being able to be of use; his brevity on such occasions often amounted to bluntness. The position of being importuned unavailingly was to him peculiarly irksome, and he could not bear to deceive with false hopes, or tantalize another by

the selfish evasion or postponement of a disagreeable "no." What his sense of right prompted on many such occasions cost him dear. The self-love of the luckless suitor for place was stung by the unceremonious refusal to hear his cumulative proofs of fitness; and his lack of discernment too readily ascribed to inconsiderate selfishness, what in fact originated from motives the most opposite. But in this, as in most other things in life, men are judged by manner rather than by the real tendency or intention of what they do. His impatience and frankness combined to render his demeanour in the instances alluded to ungracious, and not only served to make him enemies, but tended to feed the calumny so industriously circulated, that he was a heartless self-seeker. It may sound strange and almost paradoxical to say that of these calumnies he was at all periods of his life the principal author. Believe himself, and he was an utterly worthless person, destitute of the power to serve others, and disinclined even to listen to the narrative of their wrongs or claims; the truth being that he often did essential services without their knowing it; and that he would rather in many cases take the pains necessary to obtain an object than sit quiet to hear absurd reasons stated

why it should be done, or to receive the protestations of exaggerated gratitude which he did not believe.

An amusing incident may be mentioned here as illustrative of the strange variety of persons whom his altered fame and fortune led to seek his favour, though it is not immediately connected with the particular portion of the subject last referred to. The neglect with which he had been treated in early days at the bar, by Sir William M'Mahon, has already been noticed, as well as the trite excuse which that learned functionary was wont to employ, when anything like a remonstrance was in private hinted at. Times were now changed. Mr. Sheil was at the zenith of parliamentary reputation, and a distinguished member of the Government. The Master of the Rolls having enjoyed his lucrative office for a period of twenty years, wished to retire with a full pension, and in order to secure that object, had come to London to make representations in influential quarters. Amongst others he resorted to his distinguished connexion, of whom perhaps he at length began to think that he had seen too little in old times. He was received, as a matter of course, with the courtesy due to his age and station. When he proceeded to explain the nature of his demand on the

Treasury, he was politely reminded how careful he had always been not to compromise his own reputation, by yielding to considerations of family affection; and in a diplomatic periphrasis, he was given to understand that an ill-natured world would be apt to designate the affair as a job. "I do not set up for a purist myself; but *my* sense of public duty, Sir William, must prevent me from having the pleasure of complying with your request."

His readiness to serve men of character and talent, when opportunities occurred of doing so, was practically experienced by many who had no particular claim upon him, and by some who were not even personally known to him. An instance of this kind may be mentioned regarding Mr. Leigh Hunt, in whose favour a pension had been asked from Government, but whom he at the time had never seen. In a letter of the 30th May, 1839, to Mr. Macready, who had taken an interest in the matter, he alludes to his having brought the subject under the notice of Lord Melbourne, "who did not seem disinclined: he told me that *he* had not offered a pension to Miss Martineau; I put the case of Leigh Hunt, on the ground of that pension having been declined."

He was at all times accessible to those who wished

for his advice, either in politics or letters; but the freedom and candour with which it was invariably given, often took the inquirer by surprise. A gentleman who had taken some pains in preparing a paper for the Edinburgh Review, on the existing state of Ireland, waited upon him for the purpose of asking his opinion on some of the views which it contained; and after stating the principal features in what was meant to be a sort of comparative anatomy of the past and present condition of that country, Sheil interrupted him, saying, "What do you intend all this for?"

"For a political article on Ireland," was the inexperienced writer's answer.

"But these things are not politics:—Keep in the Whigs; keep out the Tories—that's politics. All the rest may be very admirable in their way as political statistics or political metaphysics, but upon the fate of parties they have no perceptible effect, and in the present state of things, where the stability of the system you approve depends on a vote or two more or less in the House of Commons, nobody cares for matters of the kind you name."

The conversation then turned upon the revival of the Repeal agitation to which he was much op-

posed. Circumstances had much changed since 1832. The whole system of Irish administration had been altered in the sense which the Catholic party had demanded at that time. The judicial bench and the jury box, the shrievalty of counties, and the mayoralty of towns, were no longer the exclusive possession of Protestants; and in every department of the Executive Catholics had been admitted to their fair share of public honour and emolument. The question of the Irish church temporalities had been virtually laid aside with the assent of all parties; and that of the curtailment of the Irish franchise raised by Lord Stanley's Registration Bill was the principal source of popular jealousy and distrust. It could not, however, be said that the Cabinet of Lord Melbourne, or the liberal party in England generally, were wanting in zeal for the defence of Irish rights in this respect; and Mr. Sheil, who had ample opportunities of knowing and appreciating their sincerity in the matter, and upon whom party ties and associations doubtless exercised no little sway, felt no hesitation in condemning with his accustomed vehemence the re-opening of the question of the legislative union between Great Britain and Ireland. He was thoroughly persuaded of the futility of an attempt to restore an independent Par-

liament in the latter country. He had become intimately acquainted with those imperial instincts which animate all sections of the governing class in England, and in which are mingled traditional pride, the love of power, and something perhaps more difficult to describe or designate than either; but the similitude of which, history reveals in the governments of many of the greatest states of the world, and which, for want of a better name, may be termed the self-persuasion of a destiny to impose the law of their own civilization upon weaker races and communities. All this he felt and knew, and knowing likewise the inherent weakness of every combination, such as that contemplated by O'Connell—a combination which he foresaw would be mainly and distinctively sectarian, no matter what the desires or designs of its author might be—and which, as such, was certain to have arrayed against it the whole people of England—he earnestly and honestly deprecated the course about to be pursued by his former colleague in agitation, as one that could only end in disappointment and in failure. "Repeal," he exclaimed, "there's no such thing as Repeal. Repeal—if by that you mean a peaceful dissolution of the Union—Repeal must be carried in the House of Commons; and how is that to be done?

The House of Commons would die before it conceded such a measure."

During his sojourn in Ireland in the autumn, these convictions were, if possible, strengthened by all he witnessed there. To an official friend* he expressed his regret that "instead of thinking of the Registry, the people of Tipperary were talking of Repeal. O'Connell was doing incalculable mischief which he would discover when it was too late."

The great struggle of the Session of 1840 was that upon Lord Stanley's Irish Registration Bill. The second reading having been carried before Easter by a majority of sixteen, the House stood pledged to some change in the mode of registering electors in Ireland: but it was contended on the liberal side that if the noble lord's proposition were adopted, the franchise, already too limited, would be reduced almost to a name, and that under the semblance of remedying abuses of detail, wholesale abrogation of popular privileges was contemplated and aimed at. It was shown, notwithstanding the allegations of multitudinous frauds in the admission of claims, that the county of Cork, with a population of 700,000, did not contain 4000 electors; that Tipperary, with a

* 15th September, 1840.

population of 400,000, did not possess a constituency of 2500; and that in other counties corresponding numbers prevailed. Still further to diminish such constituencies would obviously effect a great and immediate transfer of power from one party to another; but in doing so it must inevitably resuscitate universal and bitter discontent; and, in the words of Lord John Russell, "do more to revive the cry for Repeal than anything Mr. O'Connell had been able to effect by his speeches on the subject."*

But expostulation passed unheeded. The possibility of resuscitating agitation in Ireland was treated with derision. Five years of a Whig administration, supported by O'Connell, had quenched it was said the very embers of excitement, or if any still smouldered here and there, they might easily be trodden out by a strong government. Only let that great good be obtained, and no more would be heard of Repeal or Repealers. A few professing liberals were caught by the specious tone of a desire to purify the electoral lists, that was used in advocating the Bill. To this Mr. Sheil alluded in the debate of the 11th June, in which he forewarned the coming Premier of the dif-

* Debate on going into Committee, 18th May, 1840.

ficulties that were preparing for him whenever he should again take office, by "his noble and formidable friend."

"It is most unnatural and most inconsistent that any man calling himself a Reformer should co-operate in such an enterprise, and should become the auxiliary of a man who, upon every Irish question, is utterly destitute of the slightest claim upon the confidence of Parliament, who was told by Lord Althorp to his face, in the face of the House and of the country, that his administration of Ireland had been a lamentable failure—who has since that time, by the extent of his political transitions, acquired a new title to the disrelish of one country, and to the distrust of both—who deals for ever in extremes—was ready to swamp the Lords when he was a Whig, and is ready to swamp the people when he has turned a Tory—lauded the Irish members to the skies in 1832, when it suited his purpose, and would now slap the door of the House of Commons in their faces; and of all the traits in the political character of the noble lord, of all the incidents of his political conduct, the most to be lamented —who after having denounced 'an expiring faction,' and held them up to public scorn, now leagues himself with that bad Irish party which he represented as miserable, and which is not the less deserving of the designation which he thought it not unmeet to employ in their regard, because he has combined with them for the achievement of their pernicious projects, and has so far forgotten the principles which ought to have descended to him as an inheritance as to prostitute his talents for the attainment of purposes to which every beating of his heart must at this moment tell him that they ought never to have been applied; and is this the man—is it to such a man that the delicate and difficult and almost perilous task of legislating for Ireland ought to be confided—is this the man to whom we are to surrender the franchises of the country, upon which he inflicted calamities so

fearful, and which was driven almost to insurrection by his misrule? See what in the course of a few weeks he has accomplished. The country was at rest—political excitement had subsided—that wise policy to which last year this House bore an attestation so signal had produced the most salutary fruits. No public meetings were held, the tithe question had been adjusted, and the very name of a measure to Englishmen of all others the most obnoxious, was scarcely uttered. A general calm prevailed. Suddenly the noble lord bursts like a hurricane upon us. The elements of confusion are at once let loose, and the country is swept back into that tempestuous agitation from which we deemed ourselves secure. Stop while there is yet time—stop the noble lord in his career of mischief or the consequences may be irretrievable. You may gain a temporary triumph; you may rob us of the fruits of that Emancipation which itinerant incendiaries invite you openly and directly to rescind; but your victories will be dearly purchased. Of Ireland—of organized, confederated, discontented Ireland—beware; beware of that country which you ought to have been instructed by experience, fearful if not humiliating, not to hold in disregard. Twelve months have scarcely passed since the member for Tamworth declared that Ireland presented to him his greatest difficulty. Will that difficulty be diminished by the sinister co-operation of his noble and exceedingly formidable friend? Persevere in that policy by which this measure has been prompted, and Ireland will soon be in a condition more fearful than that which preceded Emancipation. You will enter again into an encounter with that gigantic agitation by which you were before discomfited, and by which (for its power is trebled) you will be again overthrown; for all the consequences that will ensue from the excitement which you will have wantonly engendered you will be responsible: you will be responsible for the calamities which will gush in abundance so disastrous, from the sources of bitterness which you will have unsealed. If Ireland shall be arrested in the march of improvement in which she has been under a Whig Government

rapidly advancing—if Ireland shall be thrown back fifty years—if the value of property shall be impaired—if the security of property shall be shaken—if political animosities shall be embittered—if religious detestations shall become more rabid and more envenomed—if the mind of Ireland shall become one heated mass ready to catch fire at a single spark; for all this you will be responsible."

CHAPTER XIX.

1841—1843.

Irish County Franchise—Free Trade Budget—Appeal to the country—Official changes—Representation of Tipperary—Dungarvon—Sir Robert Peel's Cabinet—New Sliding-scale—Income Tax—Education Clauses of Factory Bill—The Ballot.

EARLY in February, 1841, Lord Stanley declared his intention of renewing the attempt to carry an Irish Registration Bill. A counter-project was at the same time announced by Lord Morpeth, whereby provision was not only made for remedying the abuses complained of; but in order to rectify the still greater evil of an inadequate constituency, it was proposed to confer the franchise in counties on all rated occupiers of holdings valued under the Poor Law at five pounds a-year, whose tenancy did not fall short of fourteen years. The Conservatives objected to this change as an infraction of the settlement of 1832, as tending

to give a more popular suffrage to one part of the United Kingdom than that possessed by the remainder; and finally, because rateable value was proposed as a substitute for the "beneficial interest" sworn to by the tenant as possessed by him over and above the rent which he paid. They insisted that no extension of the franchise was necessary; and that no difference ought to be recognised in legislation between England and Ireland. To this it was replied by Lord Morpeth, that in 1829 the whole body of small freeholds had been swept away, and that they had not been restored by the Reform Bill, though in England they still existed; that if something effectual were not done, the electoral bodies would virtually cease to exist; and that a five-pound rating franchise would not create in Ireland larger county constituencies than on an average were to be found throughout Great Britain. On the third night's debate upon the second reading, Mr. Sheil spoke with great spirit and effect. At the close of the discussion there appeared to be for the second reading, 299; against it, 294. The Committee was deferred till the 23rd April.

In Ireland the county constituencies had been reduced so much by the refusal to grant leases on the

part of the proprietary, that some new franchise had become absolutely necessary. Some urged the creation of a Five-pound franchise in fee, with occupancy as a test, in order to prevent the making of fictitious votes by means of merely colourable rent-charges: and this suggestion was eventually brought forward as part of the Ministerial plan. But it could not be denied that when, as was the case in many counties, a systematic purpose obviously existed on the part of landlords to prevent the acquisition of the right of voting by those whom they could not politically control, this, like every other scheme based upon the creation of freehold tenure, must prove in a great degree abortive. No alternative remained but to adopt henceforth the principle that the franchise should depend upon occupancy irrespective of any conditions of tenure, while proof of value should be sought for in the public rate-book, which had not been made for the purposes of party registration, and which, unlike the private rent-roll of the landlord, was at all times subject to public scrutiny and correction. It was not without much hesitation, and after the consideration of many serious doubts, that this important change was approved by the Government, and submitted by them to the Legislature. By the Bill introduced by Lord Morpeth, it was proposed to confer the right of

voting in counties on every occupier of land rated to the poor at a sum of five pounds a-year. This would unquestionably have created constituencies sufficiently numerous: but the great question still remained, would they in ordinary times, when no general excitement prevailed, be found sufficiently independent? Mr. Sheil's opinion, founded upon long and practical observation, was, that however desirable a wide extension of the suffrage might be, it was unreasonable to anticipate that undue influence would not still be exerted, and unjust to expect that poor and humble men would be able to resist it without the protection of the Ballot. Mere fellowship in exposure to intimidation, however multitudinous, could not neutralize the debasing fears with which each small holder would be haunted, when asked to give his vote publicly for the candidate whom his landlord disapproved. A few examples made in each locality would have the effect he thought upon the next occasion of demoralizing, through the medium of their apprehensions, scores whose condition made them sympathise with the sufferers. If public policy required the formation of numerous constituencies, it was the duty of the Legislature to follow out fairly to their consequences the necessities of the case; and when it called upon the poor man to exercise the rights of active citizenship,

it was bound to afford him that protection without which those rights might for him become matter of penalty, not of privilege. Without such protection he was, to use his own words (when addressing the then Under-Secretary for Ireland, Mr. Norman McDonald), "vehemently opposed to the admission of tenants at will as voters in Ireland. He felt convinced that they would be the wretched instruments of the landlords, or their miserable victims, and he did not wish for slaves or martyrs."

Both bills stood over until after Easter, when long and angry discussions took place on various amendments. At length upon the 5th May, the House being in Committee, the question was put that an Eight pounds rating clause stand part of the Government Bill. The smallness of their majority had induced ministers to modify their original proposition respecting the new franchise, and to substitute an eight pounds rating for five pounds. This was done in the hope of conciliating the support of a few individuals, who declared themselves distrustful of so considerable a change. The result however, was only to sow disunion among their supporters, and to render all progress more hopeless than ever. On the 5th of May, on the question being put that the

Eight pounds clause stand part of the bill, a scene of bitter recrimination arose among the prominent members of the Whig and Radical sections, in which Mr. Hume, Mr. Ward, Mr. Sheil, Mr. C. Wood, and Mr. O'Connell took part. The clause was finally rejected by 300 to 289; whereupon the measure was at once abandoned; and Lord Stanley, contented with the damaging impression created by the discussion, withdrew his bill also.

To supply the deficiency in the revenue which, in 1841, amounted to no less than 2,400,000*l.*, a Free Trade budget was resolved on. Considerable reductions in the differential duties on sugar and timber were proposed by the Chancellor of the Exchequer, on the 31st April; and on the 7th May, Lord John Russell announced his memorable proposition of an eight shilling duty on corn. The debate which ensued, lasted from the 7th to the 18th May, in the course of which above eighty members spoke. The speech of Mr. Sheil was delivered near the close. He had to deal with an exhausted subject in a wearied and impatient House; yet he contrived to engage general attention, and to keep it.

The public mind, long apathetic, grew quickly alive to the momentous importance of the alterations in

the commercial system thus propounded. It was clear that in the existing parliament none of them were likely to be carried, and it seemed still more certain that if the Conservatives succeeded to power, no essential modification of either corn or sugar duties could be obtained. A new House of Commons, pledged to free trade principles, and the retention in office of the only ministry who had ever ventured to avow even a theoretic conviction of their truth, was on all hands believed to be alike indispensable to their practical triumph. All the wise men of the clubs and coteries saw this with the usual sagacity that belongs to their pretentious class; and yet they all proved to be egregiously and entirely mistaken. On the 27th May, Sir Robert Peel moved, and carried by a majority of one, a vote of want of confidence in ministers. By this they were precluded from even bringing on, as they proposed doing, the question of a fixed duty on corn. The dissolution was thus precipitated, and took place some weeks earlier than it would otherwise have occurred. Whether its results were in consequence materially varied, it were waste of time to inquire. But by the end of August a Parliament was returned, containing in both Houses overwhelming majorities pledged to support Protection and Sir Robert Peel.

The Liberal party were utterly discomfited; the Whig Cabinet was driven from power; and the strongest of strong governments was formed, to defend the differential tariff on timber, sugar, and corn. What followed hardly needs being told. Within twelve months the theory of protection had been abandoned by the new Cabinet, amid the undiscerning plaudits of their enthusiastic supporters. In the course of the three following years numerous relaxations in the restrictive code were successively introduced; and at length the great monopoly, for whose sacred preservation this protracted struggle had been waged, was stricken down in a Protectionist Parliament by the hand of a Protectionist Premier.

In the changes that took place in various departments of the Administration, previous to the dissolution of Parliament in 1841, Mr. Sheil exchanged the Vice-Presidency of the Board of Trade for the post of Judge-Advocate, an office more congenial to his professional habits in former years, and which, in point of emolument and rank, was in no degree inferior to that which he had held since 1839. Many of his party indulged in the belief that to the appeal about to be made to the country on the Free Trade budget of Mr. Baring, the declared response would be such as to give them a renewed lease of power. It is

evident from the following extract from a letter to an intimate friend in Ireland, that Mr. Sheil's anticipations were very different.

"I am to be Judge-Advocate. The Tories are furious at my seeing the Queen on Courts Martial. I fear that I shall enjoy my honours for a very brief period—but the Tories are not likely to hold office long—and when we return again, I shall have claims founded on my previous position in the party."*

At the general election, Mr. Sheil resolved to relinquish the representation of the county of Tipperary, which he had held since the year 1833, and to offer himself for the borough of Dungarvon. Much disappointment was expressed by many of his friends in Ireland at the announcement of this determination, and not a few remonstrances were in private urged against the intended change. But his mind was made up, and the reasons which he assigned with his usual frankness, admitted of no discussion. In reply to some expostulation from a member of the Irish Government, he assigned two distinct but equally sufficient reasons. "I leave Tipperary because there is a great clamour against me for not having gorged my friends with patronage. Some of the most noisy

* Letter to Mr. Justice Ball, 18th June, 1841.

among the patriots were the most exacting. I received letters containing *threatening* notices every day. You should also bear in mind that I shall have occasion to vacate my seat in Parliament, in the event of ulterior ministerial changes; and then I should have to contest Tipperary single-handed. I have already spent in contests a great deal more than any of my friends who (now) hold permanent offices, and it would be very unjustifiable in me to encumber my wife's property, in order to gratify my ambition. It is far more befitting that I should represent a borough like Dungarvon, than a county seventy miles long. But as far as I am concerned, make your mind easy about Tipperary: when I tell you that Lord Duncannon is contented, there is nothing to be feared."

He was desirous that the motives by which he was actuated should be generally understood, and these, in answer to some advice offered about the same time by his friend Mr. Staunton, he explained to him with equal candour.

"I have long since determined to leave Tipperary —I could not obtain any patronage from Government, and a great clamour was raised against me by the numerous expectants who had indeed a right to some

return for their exertions in my behalf. They did not believe my assurances that I could not do anything for them, and there was a strong feeling of resentment entertained amongst those to whom I should be obliged to look for my return. At public meetings in Tipperary, although I had successfully exerted myself in Parliament for the country, no votes of thanks were given me. Opposition was even made to my health being drunk at public dinners; and O'Connell, on one occasion, was compelled to defend me. I thought myself ill-used after having laboured so strenuously for the cause, and I knew the motive to which these affronts should be ascribed. It is of very little consequence to me in the House of Commons whether I represent a borough or a great county. In Parliament no sort of attention is paid to a man because he is member for this place or for that, his influence being entirely from his power of speaking, whatever it may be. I am not the natural representative of Tipperary. I have no property there by *inheritance*. I have only a life estate in Mrs. Sheil's property; would it be justifiable in me to stand contest after contest in a great county, and call again and again on my wife to renew the sacrifices in money she has already made? As I am con-

nected with the Government, I must, whenever official changes take place, vacate my seat, and in Tipperary I should have, upon every move in the Government, to meet the whole gentry of the county who are arrayed against me. The consequence would be the dilapidation of my fortune, and I should be under the very painful necessity of reducing my family to privations which it would be most unreasonable in me to demand. These are the considerations which have swayed me in arriving at the determination to which I have come. I know that my *friends* call me niggard and miserable, but they do not reflect on the enormous expenditure which I cannot avoid, and make no allowance for the peculiarities of my position. *You* will do so, and I entertain very little doubt that, when you shall have read this letter, you will think that I have acted wisely and well. *I have not left the county without a candidate in my place.* A man will start in every way eligible."*

When the new Parliament met, most of the Whig Government reappeared in their places. Lord John Russell had been elected for the City of London, and Sir John Hobhouse for Nottingham; but the West Riding was no longer represented by Lords Morpeth and

* Letter dated 28th June, 1841.

Milton; Liverpool, Southampton, Dublin, and Belfast had each sent two Conservatives; Lord Howick had been displaced in Northumberland, and Sir De Lacy Evans in Westminster. In Ireland and Scotland, the Liberals maintained their preponderance; but in England and Wales they were far outnumbered. Upon the whole, they were in a minority of seventy-six. To the re-election of Mr. Shaw Lefevre as Speaker, no objection was made; but an amendment to the address moved by Mr. Stuart Wortley, recommending the removal of Ministers, was carried by 360 to 269. Early in September, the Administration of Sir Robert Peel was definitively constituted. As in that which it succeeded, a majority of the Cabinet were peers and sons of peers; and in the subordinate offices this complexion was much more observable. "Happening to sit beside one of the *ex-Ministers* at dinner, soon after the writs for the new officials had been moved, I observed," said Sheil, "that Peel was filling up all his posts with Lords. 'And he is quite right,' said Lord ———; 'he understands what he has to deal with, and how his majority can alone be kept together.' The esoteric principle of both Whigs and Tories is in this respect the same. They tolerate a few plebeians as working colleagues; but they think and feel towards

them rather as advocates whom they have retained than equals whom they are bound to recognise. This strong sense of a tendency to give undue preponderance in the Administration to persons of aristocratic lineage or connexions was not with him a temporary impression. He felt that in neither of the great parties in the State were personal ability, worth, or services recognised as constituting, in men of moderate fortune or plebeian birth, any real claim to high office. In the professions he used to say, although there is often a good deal of favouritism, the sons of the people can hardly complain that as between classes the systematic injustice prevails; but in political life it is far otherwise; the House of Commons is more intensely susceptible to aristocratic prejudices than any assembly in the civilized world. Good taste prevents in general the open manifestation of these prejudices in a way noticeable by the "gallery," or that the public out of doors can ever be made thoroughly to understand. You cannot by any description make a West Indian comprehend the sensation of frost until he has endured it; the sensation for him exists not, nor can he sympathize with those who feel its painful and benumbing influence. But the reality is there nevertheless; to this cause, more than to any mere

spirit of clique or nepotism, is to be ascribed the unfair preference usually shown in the formation of every Cabinet and in the distribution of the higher offices generally. The Whigs are blamed for yielding to this insolent and exclusive spirit; but they will never be cured by any amount of blame that may be cast upon them while the House of Commons remains what it is. When its composition shall be changed, and the middle classes shall attain a practical equality in parliament, then they will get a fair share of administrative power; but not till then.

Akin to these feelings were others less easy perhaps of definition or appreciation, connected with the position which men who have won their own way to distinction occupy in society. "I cannot," he said, "be suspected of pique, for I have had enough and more than enough of social attentions paid to me. From the time I had become successful as a speaker in debate, I was courted and caressed by the owners of great houses, and sought for as a guest at their tables. Few men I suppose are altogether indifferent to these marks of consideration. I confess that I at least was not; and that the refinement of such society had for me no little charm. But I soon found that at first I had been asked as a

curiosity to be shown to *un*-parliamentary friends who had heard of me, or seen my name in the newspapers; and afterwards, because I was supposed to have the power of being amusing." The friend to whom this was said expressed his doubts of the justice of his impressions, and gently rallied him on his somewhat morbid tendency to self-depreciation. But he grew excited as he continued to talk on the subject; and sometimes accompanying his illustrations of what he had seen and felt with boisterous but bitter laughter—sometimes with a hoarse and low intonation, full of sudden emotion—he depicted the unreality of the outward show of regard that is paid in aristocratic circles generally, to men of mere genius. "So long as you are the town-talk as a painter, a writer, a speaker, or a soldier, you will have plenty of invitations to dinner; and good breeding insures you an agreeable, if not a flattering, reception. But don't be duped; there is no equality in all this. 'Tis not what they say to you, but what they say of you when you are gone, that is the test. No, no; we are tolerated, that's all."

The Corn Bill, and that imposing the Income Tax occupied the greater portion of the session of 1842. Both were strenuously resisted by the Liberals in

opposition. The former established an amended sliding scale, which the Whigs opposed as a method condemned by experience, and less equitable and intelligible than a fixed duty; while the Radicals condemned it as another futile and pernicious attempt to prolong the existence of a system of taxation, not for revenue but for class profit. On the 8th March, Lord Ebrington moved that the second reading be postponed to that day six months. For, 176; against, 284. Mr. Sheil spoke at some length.

Less was said on these points than on the others above adverted to; and the House was more amused, if not more influenced, by telling commentaries made on apt quotations from former speeches of the Minister and his friends in former debates upon the subject. Mr. Raikes Currie, Mr. Roebuck, and other well-known Liberals, supported the proposition as a bold step towards economy and simplicity in financial legislation. Lord J. Russell declared himself opposed to it as burthensome, unequal, and inexpedient under the then existing circumstances of the country, and he was sustained in these views by Sir G. Grey, Mr. Labouchere, Mr. F. Baring, Mr. C. Wood, Mr. Hawes, Mr. Charles Buller, and Mr. Sheil.

To the prognostics of the Free-traders, that the

proposed modification of the Corn Law would not be the last, but that ere long a further and wider change would be forced upon the Minister, no reply was given. Lord Howick had rendered this consequence of an imperfect measure like that of 1842 particularly clear. Sir Robert Peel followed him in the debate, but took no notice of the warning. Mr. Sheil began by alluding to the omission, being surprised that one "so remarkable for perspicuity should have mistaken the observation of a noble lord so remarkable for perspicacity." He admitted frankly that a fixed duty was only the less of two evils, and then added:

"Whatever may be the opinions as to a fixed duty or the effect upon the commercial and manufacturing interests of this country, there is no doubt that during the last four years millions of quarters of corn have been imported, and yet we have no trade. Trade is barter—trade is the exchange of one commodity for another. When our demand for corn is desultory the demand for our manufactures cannot be permanent. If there were a free trade in corn, foreign countries would not pass laws intended to exclude our manufactures; they would not do as they now do—they would not pass retaliatory tariffs to protect their own domestic manufactures. It is not the agriculturists of this country, it is not the independent yeomen, it is not the farmer who expends his capital upon his land, it is not the man who dreads competition from foreign markets, but it is those in possession of the secrets of our mechanism—it is those who emulate us in industry and begin to rival us in skill to whom your corn laws afford protection. It will hardly be contended that the countries from which during the last four years we have drawn our supplies of corn,

have taken the manufactures of this country in return in anything like a commensurate quantity. It appears from a return laid upon the table of the House, that the number of English vessels which entered the Baltic in ballast in the year 1839 was 1100—not laden with your manufactures but wholly in ballast. Look at the returns also before the House of the number of vessels which entered the port of Dantzic in 1838, distinguishing those which were laden and those in ballast. In 1838 there were 413 English vessels entering the port of Dantzic in ballast; and in the same year 417 vessels left the port of Dantzic laden with corn. This proves undeniably that when you now take corn from foreign countries your own manufactures are not taken in return. What effect has this system upon your currency—upon that metallic currency which the right honourable gentleman has established and over which he ought to watch with peculiar care? It seems to me to be impossible to establish a metallic currency and to continue a system of laws such as those which exist. Corn must be paid for in bullion; the exchange is against us; the circulation is checked and the inevitable result is a panic. . . . If something effectual is not done in Parliament—in a Parliament in which the landed interests are said to have such an influence—I am afraid that the people of this country will be disposed to turn with resentful importunity from the mere expression of our sympathy, and will adopt a more stringent mode of proceeding; and as they have been led to believe that the Poor Law was not enacted from any profound solicitude for the poor, so they will think that the Corn Laws are retained from an exclusive regard to the feelings and interests of the rich. And I must say that it would be hard indeed for this House to turn from the supplications for relief; it would be hard if, while we by our legislation affect the employment of the people and induce the operatives of this country to ask for an asylum in those domiciles of woe which are provided for them, we refuse to afford them the means of supporting themselves in a manner becoming their ancient

character and position. If charity is to be withheld, let not work at all events be refused. The people of England do not ask for charity, they do not go on their knees to ask any eleemosynary contributions; they ask for bread to produce work; for work to produce bread; they ask not for cheap bread indeed, but for more—they ask for the means of earning bread, whether it be cheap or costly. They call on us to strike off those fetters which cramp the industry of the country, and in doing so they wish us to consult, not merely their interest but our own. I entirely agree in the sentiments which I have heard expressed by an honourable and learned member to-night, that the agricultural and commercial interests of the country are not distinct—so far from their being distinct, so far from their being at variance and conflicting with each other, they are the same. Trade depends upon agriculture, agriculture depends upon trade. I am sure my honourable friend the member for Stockport, when he looks upon the splendid picture which the rural scenery of England presents, would draw from its contemplation one of the highest pleasures. I am sure the right honourable gentleman the member for Kent, a native English gentleman, must see in the very smoke with which our cities are enveloped from their furnaces, intimations of the means by which the agricultural interest is advanced, and the greatness of the country is achieved. No, sir, the commercial and agricultural interests of England are not distinct; but if they were—if it was necessary to make a distinction between them—if in giving sustainment to both it is necessary to make a sacrifice of either, I should be disposed to say that the maintenance of the commerce of England ought, in the mind of every Englishman deserving the name, to be the object of paramount consideration. It is not, after all, by agriculture that this country is so distinguished; for what is this but a speck upon the scene? It is not to agriculture—it is not to the extent or fertility of our soil—it is not to any rare skill in calling forth the products of the earth. No; it is the spirit of commercial enterprise by which Englishmen

are distinguished from every other nation on the face of the earth. It is the indomitable perseverance in the glorious pursuit of our boundless traffic by which every difficulty has been overcome and every obstacle surmounted. It is to the unwearied energies of this country—to its amazing industry—to its untiring zeal—to the marvellous skill with which it has filled the earth with the products of its labour—it is this commerce which has extended its influence to the boundaries of the earth—it is to these glorious causes that England is indebted for its prominence among the nations of the world."

There is indeed nothing in this or in any other of his Free-trade speeches that merits the epithet of originality; and yet their effect in delivery was impressive and striking. If there was one person among his hearers who above all others was upon this subject *exigeant*, it was Mr. Cobden; but even he did not deny that while he listened to one who knew so much less than himself about the question in debate, he felt it impossible not to be carried away by the vehemence of his manner, the intensity of his look, and his dramatic power of intonation. "As I listened to his thrilling voice, and watched the quivering of his whole frame, it was impossible not to believe that he was thoroughly in earnest: it was not like any other man I had ever heard making a speech: he seemed to me like one possessed." These expressions were used in conversation in the autumn of 1842.

Long and varied discussions arose on the proposal to revive, in time of peace, a direct tax on incomes, which had previously been regarded as a resource to be kept in reserve to meet the exigencies of war. Its inequality of pressure, its inquisitorial character, and the large exemptions without which it had never yet been imposed, afforded the principal themes of expatiation to the anti-Ministerialists. On the last of these grounds Sir Robert Peel had laid himself peculiarly open to animadversion, by raising the minimum of rateable incomes from 50*l.*, which had been fixed by Mr. Pitt, to 150*l.* Ireland was exempted altogether, but incomes derived from Irish property by persons resident in England were to be charged, as a sort of indirect discouragement to absenteeism. Few of the Opposition however cared to argue the question on these grounds; nor does it appear that much impression was made by the recital of complaints urged in former periods regarding the frauds and perjuries incidental to the levy of a direct impost upon incomes. The inherent and ineradicable injustice of treating the produce of property in money or land in the same manner as the profits arising from precarious industry, or the wages of mental or physical labour, furnished the chief weapon of debate to the opponents of the

scheme; and none wielded that weapon more skilfully than the member for Dungarvon:

"What can be more unjust than to lay the same tax upon the intellect of one man, and upon the acres of another? Look at the proprietor of great territorial possessions, encompassed with every advantage by which existence can be cheered and life can be prolonged—in the daily enjoyment of the most healthful exercise—free from all mental pain—and exempt from every discomfort, excepting that which arises (to use a phrase of Edmund Burke) 'from the laborious lassitude of having nothing to do,'—secure of the permanent retention of his estates, and of transmitting to his progeny the splendid mansion and extensive domain which through a long succession have come down to him. Turn from him to the professional man, who is engaged from morning to night, and from night almost till the break of day, in the exhausting occupations from which his precarious subsistence is derived; mark, not only the toil—the incessant toil, which it is his destiny to suffer, but the wear and tear of the feelings and of the faculties which he must needs undergo; the despondency, the faintness of heart which at the approach of the slightest ailment must come upon him; the sense of insecurity by which he must perpetually be haunted; the apprehension, the consuming solicitude that must beset him, lest, by the gradual decay of his faculties, or the sudden loss of health, he may be deprived of the means of earning his livelihood, and those who are inestimably dearer to him than himself may be reduced to destitution. Look, I say, at these two men, of whom I have presented to you no exaggerated delineation, and then do you—you who are yourselves inheritors of large possessions—you who are born to affluence—you who have never known a care for to-morrow—do you 'who live at home at ease,' and know so little of dangers and the storms of adversity—do you, I say, declare whether it be just, whether it be fair, whether it be humane, that upon both these men, and in the same proportion, the same impost should be inflicted? Shall we

levy the same contribution on a man with 10,000*l.* a-year, and upon officers in the army and navy, poor clergymen who endeavour to educate their children as the children of gentlemen should be brought up, widows with miserable jointures, tradesmen, artisans, small retailers who eke out a subsistence from the petty business to which, for sixteen or seventeen hours out of the four-and-twenty, they are devoted? Is it right to tax them as you do the great patricians of the land, and to force them to discover upon oath what it perhaps most deeply concerns their just and legitimate pride to conceal? What can be more fearful, more humiliating, than to make a confession of adversity—to let a set of heartless functionaries into the secrets of calamity, and to lay misfortune bare?"*

When three years afterwards the Income Tax was renewed, the exemption of Ireland from its operation was loudly objected to; and Mr. Roebuck moved the omission of the proviso. In reply to his speech, Mr. Sheil argued that until the Legislature should concede equality of privileges, no reasonable claim existed for identity of taxation in the two countries. The imposition of new burthens while long promised rights were still withheld, would only lead to additional discontent; and the Exchequer would lose more than it could gain by the change.

"I trust that the Minister will take the same view as I do in reference to the facility with which a large revenue could be obtained from a country whose resources, through misrule,

* Debate in the House of Commons on the Income Tax, 8th of April, 1842.

remain undeveloped. If you will but endeavour to adapt your institutions to Ireland, instead of labouring to adapt Ireland to your institutions—in that antithesis you will find that a great deal of truth is condensed—if, I repeat, instead of adapting Ireland to your institutions, you do but try to adapt your institutions to Ireland; if, instead of inflicting a temporary tranquillity, you confer a perpetual peace, you will obtain from Ireland a revenue far exceeding anything which, by the torture of this inquisitorial imposition, it would be possible for you to obtain. Peace, true peace—peace founded upon justice and equality and national contentment, has an enriching as well as a civilising and ameliorating attribute. Peace will pay you large import duties—peace will consume in abundance sugar, and coffee, and tea, and every article on which a charge will remain—peace will draw from the earth twice its ordinary return, and while it shall give you more food will take more of your manufactures in return—peace will enlarge and give security to that market which is already the best you possess—peace will open a wider field to your laborious industry and your commercial enterprise; and for every benefit you confer upon us, for every indulgence you shall show us, for every gift you bestow, with an usury incalculably profitable by peace you will be repaid."*

But while he was thus ready to join in maintaining, on questions of practical moment, what he considered National as distinguished from Imperial interests, the exclusive claim to patriotism which some ignorant and many dishonest men raised in Ireland on behalf of all who called themselves Repealers, excited only his contempt. Nor was he often moved to resent their senseless vituperation otherwise than by a bitter jest.

* Debate on Income Tax, House of Commons, 19th February, 1845.

On some one rather foolishly boasting in his presence that amongst the Repealers were to be found all the rising talent and real worth of the community, he said, laughing, "I am not competent perhaps to appraise their real value, but I have reason to believe that some of them are very expensive: a friend of mine says he paid twenty pounds a-head for them at the last election."

He took much interest in a case of libel which had arisen in Ireland about this time. An article in the *Vindicator*, a popular journal published in Belfast, by Mr. C. G. Duffy (now M.P. for New Ross), contained some strictures upon the state of things subsisting between landlord and tenant in many parts of Ireland, and had been made the subject of a Government prosecution. A trial took place in Dublin, in which Chief Justice Pennefather betrayed for the first time the singular unfitness for the discharge of high judicial functions, which afterwards became manifest in so conspicuous a degree. His charge to the jury was an attack upon the accused, and an invective against the opinions promulgated by him, and was more one-sided and vehement than the speeches which had been made by the counsel for the Crown. The sensation it was calculated to produce was heightened by the fact that, with a single exception, the jury had been taken from the party and the creed

opposed to that of the traverser. A verdict so obtained was little calculated to strengthen the respect for law or authority in Ireland; and viewed in connexion with other proceedings which had recently taken place under the administration of Earl de Grey, it seemed to Mr. Sheil a fitting subject for observation in the House of Commons. He wrote repeatedly to friends in Ireland, in order to obtain accurate details of all the facts which bore upon the case, and expressed his intention, if the matter was not previously taken up by others, to bring the subject forward in a substantive motion before the end of the session. To some it appeared doubtful whether he would succeed in fixing attention upon topics at all times so distasteful to the majority of the House as those in question. But he continued, both in writing and conversation, to urge its importance warmly. "If Pennefather's charge is not denounced in the House of Commons, there is an end in Dublin of the freedom of the press."* His advice however was neglected, and nothing was done. Unsupplied with adequate details, and unsupported by the Irish Liberal members, most of whom were then in secession, he was forced to forego his intention of bringing the

* Letter to M. Staunton, Esq., 1st August, 1842.

subject before the House. Utter apathy prevailed in Ireland, and it seemed to him "that the only chance of raising the popular cause from its abject condition was to open a fire upon the Church Establishment. He felt however that it might be better perhaps to wait until Peel should have carried his Irish Registration Bill, because he would be far more disposed to deal liberally with Ireland when he thought that he had nothing to apprehend."* O'Connell was still less disposed to encourage a renewal of the controversy respecting the temporalities of the Church. The personal popularity he had won with men of all parties by the manner in which he had discharged the duties of Lord Mayor of Dublin, under the new Municipal Act, revived in his breast the hopes he had so long cherished, of founding a strong national party in Ireland. As yet there were indeed few outward signs, indicating the possibility of re-kindling popular enthusiasm by the old watchword of Repeal; and he hesitated for some time after vacating the civic chair, before bringing forward the direct proposition in the metropolitan town council. With the carrying of his resolution there, however, a new condition of things appeared to arise, baffling at once all calcula-

* Extract from a letter, 31st December, 1842.

tion, and resulting in consequences to which we shall presently have occasion more particularly to refer.

In the session of 1843, a Bill for the Regulation of Factories was introduced by Ministers, which, beside other important provisions, contained clauses enabling rates to be locally imposed for the purposes of providing the means of education for children employed in such establishments. Great objection was raised by the Dissenters of all denominations to the tenour of these provisions, by which, in all cases, a preference was to be secured in the selection of teachers to members of the Established Church. Special exemption as regarded Roman Catholics was made in the bill from the general obligation respecting the reading of the Scriptures. But to a mind like that of Mr. Sheil, this exception in favour of his own creed did not render him the less alive to the religious hardship conscientiously felt by those of other persuasions. It rather served to animate him in defence of what they deemed their undoubted rights; and when the education clause was about to be discussed in Committee, he availed himself of the opportunity to state, in a tone well suited to the occasion, views and sentiments whose value is not measurable by the effect they were calculated to produce at the time upon the

fate of the specific propositions, which, some time afterwards, were abandoned.

Taking as one of the grounds of his argument the concession made in the case of Roman Catholics, and which he frankly acknowledged as one of importance, he proceeded to argue that the principle of that concession ought to secure to the Dissenters what they naturally looked upon as of equal moment,—namely, that their children should not be compelled to receive lessons in the exposition of the Sacred Writings from persons who must be members of the Anglican Church, and who might, and probably in some cases would be, sincere followers of the teachings of Dr. Pusey and his brethren among the Oxford divines.

"The right hon. baronet (Sir J. Graham) took a distinction between expounding and interpreting, but it is of a character so subtle that no ordinary casuist could have struck upon it. Not only is an ascendency given to the Church against which a not unnatural pride on the part of Dissenters revolts, but opportunities of proselytism, the more dangerous because the better disguised, are afforded. The more accomplished, the more skilful, the more zealous the churchman is, the more likely will he be to avail himself of the facilities with which he will be obviously supplied. Would the right honourable baronet permit an adroit, persuasive Catholic to teach the Scriptures to a child in whose orthodoxy he felt a concern? I very much doubt it. He should therefore excuse Dissenters for objecting to the influence with which men will be endowed in public schools, whose dogmas are almost as much at variance with those of Dissenters as the doctrines of the

Church of Rome. . . . . It is notorious that, although the external aspect of the Church remains superficially the same, it has undergone a great internal change. Men of distinguished talent, of exemplary lives, of great learning and piety, have, from motives the best and purest, made an eloquent announcement of opinions in more strict conformity with the tenets of the Catholic Church than with the principles of the Reformation. Those opinions have been adopted by laymen highly born and bred, remarkable for their proficiency in literature, for the gracefulness of their minds and their persuasive manners. How largely have the Puseyites borrowed from that portion of our religious system whose truth exalts and consoles, which raises us above the sphere of ordinary thinking, chases despair from anguish, restores to us 'the loved, the lost, the distant, and the dead,' pours into minds the most deeply hurt the most healing balm, ministers to the loftiest hope, and awakens those imaginings which, to use the Miltonian phrase, 'brings all heaven before our eyes?' . . . The schools are local, are to be supported by a local rate and not a national fund—the district, not the State, is to be taxed for their maintenance. Is it not monstrous then, that in those localities where Dissenters constitute a majority, they should be made the object of this wanton legislative affront? You don't pursue this course in Ireland—why? Because the majority of the people are Catholics. But in the districts where local schools are to be supported with local imposts, the majority are in many instances Dissenters. The ministers of the Church therefore cannot insist that, in right of their general tutelage of the national mind, they are entitled to the control which is given them by this bill; and I am at a loss to discover what they conceive it will profit them to exercise a power so invidious as that which they are now seeking to obtain. . . . What have the defenders of the Church to dread from the influence of dissent in the schools which it is proposed to establish? Let them consider the bulwarks by which the Church, in refer-

ence to national instruction, is already sustained; and let them dismiss their fears of any evil effect which these schools can have on its stability. Is not Oxford, Cambridge, and Durham theirs? Have they not a direct mastery over almost every place of public instruction where the men who are to will the destinies of England receive the elements of instruction? Do not a vast body of the middle classes draw their first intellectual nutriment from the bosom of the Church? and can you turn your eyes to any part of this great kingdom in which you do not find the Church already exercising an influence over education which it is impossible to distrust? What has the Church to dread? Has she reason to tremble at the influence of dissent among the lower classes of the manufacturing population? . . .
Monopolies in religion are like all other monopolies — they retard improvement. It will do no harm to put the Church upon the necessity of exertion, and teach her that, instead of relying on any unjust predominance, she should resort to more legitimate endeavours to secure an honourable influence among the humbler classes of the people. . . . Let religion be recommended by the practice of the Church, and in the Christian assemblage of persuasive virtues let the Protestant Propaganda be formed; but let not the Church, from a sacerdotal passion for ascendency, from a love of clerical predominance, thwart the great work of education, and incur the awful responsibility of becoming instrumental in the propagation of all the vices which ignorance has spawned upon the country. . . .
The right honourable baronet has again and again protested his strong anxiety to render his measure acceptable to the great mass of the community, and to introduce such modifications as should meet all just objections. I trust that his professions may be realized; and as he told us that he would send forth his bill in the hope that it would receive the public sanction, and indicate that the 'waters of strife had subsided,' let me be permitted to hope that he will associate with that image another incident

connected with the primeval history of mankind; and bear in mind that every colour was united in distinctness, without predominance, in that token of peace which God set in the cloud as a covenant of his reconciliation with the world."*

The allusion in the foregoing speech to the distinguishing tenets of the Oxford divines, is not the only one of the kind which is to be found in his speeches at this period. He took a lively interest in theological discussions, and was well acquainted with the historical details of the controversy which has so long occupied the public mind regarding the true teaching and discipline of the Church of England. He could not help viewing with satisfaction the many points in common which High Church writers recognise between the creed of Canterbury, as they interpret it, and that of Rome; for he anticipated from the growth of such opinions a greater degree of tolerance and kindly feeling towards the members of his own communion.

A friend, who perhaps mistook in some degree his real sentiments on the subject, meeting him one Sunday morning in the neighbourhood of St. Paul's, Knightsbridge, recommended him to accompany him

* Debate on Factory Education. House of Commons, 18th May, 1843.

thither. "No, no," he replied, "your service I have no doubt is very good, but I am going to mass: I prefer real turtle to mock turtle."

One of his most animated speeches of this session was that delivered on Mr. Grote's motion in favour of the Ballot. Disclaiming all pretension to novelty of argument, he relied rather upon the undeniable notoriety of the evils and oppressions for which he contended no other effective remedy could be proposed. Admitting frankly that it was a fine thing to see a man, whose social position rendered him absolutely independent of all sinister control, walk up to the hustings and openly vote in accordance with his individual opinions, he asked whether such cases were examples of the general condition of constituencies in town or county, in either England or Ireland? The very name of "tenants at will," in English counties, recalled the dependency of their political plight. Their enfranchisement, at the instance of Lord Chandos, was avowedly proposed and conceded in 1832 as a means of strengthening the influence of landed property; and it had been resisted by Lord Grey, upon the express ground that it would render the demand for the ballot irresistible. What was the picture presented by a county election in Ireland?

"Look," he exclaimed, "look at the 10*l.* voter who has had the misfortune to pass through the registration court, and who receives from his landlord a summons to attend the hustings, and in a contest between a Liberal and a Tory candidate to give his vote. On one side all his feelings (feelings like your own), all his national predilections, all his religious emotions, all his personal affections are enlisted. Perhaps on one side he sees a man whom he has long been accustomed to regard as the deliverer of his country—whom he looks upon as the champion of his creed and of his priesthood—of the land in which he was born, and for which if there were need he would be prompt to die—his eye fills and his heart grows big, and prayers break from his lips as he beholds him; and on the other side—the side on which he is called upon to vote—he beholds some champion of that stern ascendency by which his country has long been trodden under foot, by whom his religion has long been vilified, its ministers have long been covered with opprobrium, and the class to which he belongs has long been treated with contumely and disdain—for such a man he is called upon, under a penalty the most fearful, that of impending ruin, to give his false and miserable suffrage. Trembling, shrinking, cowering, afraid to look his friends and kinsmen in the face, he ascends the hustings as if it were the scaffold of his conscience, and with a voice almost inarticulate with emotion, stammers out, when asked for whom he votes—not the name of him whom he loves and prizes and honours—but that of the man whom he detests, loathes, abhors; for him it is, it is in his favour, that he exercises the great trust, the sanctity of which requires that it should be exercised in the face of the world; for him it is, it is in his favour, that he gives utterance to that which to all intents and purposes is a rank and odious falsehood. But perhaps he resists; perhaps, under the influence of some sentiment, half-religious, half-heroic, looking martyrdom in the face, he revolts against the horrible tyranny that you would rivet on him, and he votes, wretch that he is, in conformity with the dictates of his conscience and what he believes to be the

ordinance of his religion. Alas for him! a month or two go by, and all that he has in the world is seized; the beast that gives him milk, the horse that drags his plough, the table of his scanty meal, the bed where anguish and poverty and oppression were sometimes forgotten—all, all are taken from him; and with Providence for his guide, but with God I hope for his avenger, he goes forth with his wife and children upon the world. And this, this is the system which you and you, but I hope not you, (turning to Lord John Russell), are prepared to maintain! This is the system under which what is called a great trust is performed in the eyes of the country; this is the system under which, by the exercise of the great prerogative of freemen, open and undisguised, every British citizen invested with the franchise should feel himself exalted! Oh, fie upon this mockery! And if I cannot say fie upon them, what shall I say of the men who, with these things of a constant and perpetual occurrence staring them in the face, talk to us of the immorality of the ballot, and tell us forsooth that it is an un-English proceeding! Un-English? I know the value of that expressive and powerful word. I know the great attributes by which the people of this country are distinguished, and of the phrase which expresses the reverse of these habits I can appreciate the full and potent signification. Fraud is indeed un-English, and dissimulation and deception and duplicity and double-dealing and promise-breaking, all, every vice akin to these vile things, are indeed un-English; but tyranny, base abominable tyranny, is un-English; hard-hearted persecution of poor fanatic wretches is un-English; crouching fear on one side and ferocious menace and relentless savageness upon the other, are un-English! Of your existing system of voting these are the consequences; and for these evils, monstrous as they are, you owe it to your national character, to truth, to justice, to every consideration, political, social, religious, moral, at once to provide the cure. What shall it be? Public opinion? Public opinion! We have been hearing of it this long time—this many a day we have been hearing of public opinion. In the

last ten years and upwards, whenever the ballot has been brought forward, we have been told that for corruption, for intimidation, for every evil, public opinion would supply the cure—that marvellous and wonder-working principle, that sedative of the passions, that minister to the diseases of the mind, that alterative of the heart, was to extinguish cupidity, was to coerce ambition, allay the fears of the slave, mitigate the ferocity of the tyrant, and over all the imperfections of our nature to extend its soft and salutary sway. Well, how has it worked? Public opinion, so far as bribery is concerned, is given up. Few except the members for the University of Oxford and the University of Dublin, those amiable gentlemen among whose virtues a peculiar indulgence for Parliamentary frailties is conspicuous, would recommend that Southampton and Belfast, and the rest of the delinquent boroughs, should be consigned to public opinion. But if for bribery public opinion has lost all its sanative operation, is it, in the name of common consistency, for intimidation that this specific is to be reserved? Upon bribery, of the two, public opinion would have the greater influence. To bribery there is attached some sort of discredit; but intimidation is not only openly practised but ostentatiously avowed. Men do not deny, but take pride in it; they applaud themselves, too, for the wholesome severity which they have exercised and the salutary examples they have made. So far indeed is the principle of intimidation carried, that a regular theory of coercion has been established, and the great patricians of the land compress their notions of their privileges into a phrase to lay down the dogmas of despotism in some trite saying, and in some familiar sentence to propound the aphorisms of domination. When these doctrines are unrecanted in language, and in conduct are unrecalled—when such doctrines are defended, vindicated and applauded—when they are acted upon to an extent so vast that it is almost difficult to suggest where they have not been applied—how long, how much longer, are we to look to public opinion as the corrective of those evils which, without the application of some more

potent remedy, it is almost an imposture to deplore? Show me a remedy beside the ballot, and I will at once accede to it. Show me any other means by which the tenants of your estates and the retailers of your commerce, and all those whose dependence is so multifariously diversified, can be protected,—show me any other means by which a few men of property, confederated in the segment of a divided county, shall be frustrated in conspiring to return your fractional county members—show me any other means by which this new scheme of nomination shall be baffled and defeated—show me any other means by which a few leading gentlemen in the vicinage of almost every agricultural borough shall be foiled in their dictation to those small tradesmen whose vote and interest are demanded in all the forms of peremptory solicitation. Show me this, and I give up the ballot. But if you cannot show me this—for the sake of your country, for the sake of your high fame; upon every motive personal and public; from every consideration national and individual—pause before you repudiate the means, the only means, by which the spirit of coercion now carried into a system shall be restrained, by which the enjoyment of the franchise shall be associated with the will; by which the country shall be saved from all the suffering, the affliction and the debasement with which a general election is now attended; and without which, to a state of things most calamitous and most degrading, there is not a glimpse of hope, not a chance the most remote, that the slightest palliative will be applied."

CHAPTER XX.

1843—1846.

Irish State trials—France and Morocco—Provincial Colleges—New Zealand—Voyage to Madeira—Death of his son—Repeal of the Corn Laws—Return to England—Review of Peel's policy to Ireland—Change of Ministry.

DURING the summer of 1843, the memorable assemblies designated monster meetings took place in different parts of Ireland. Hundreds of thousands peaceably met to pronounce in favour of a Repeal of the Union, and as peaceably dispersed. Their avowed object was by the demonstration of popular numbers, acting together in perfect subordination to one guiding will, to overawe resistance on the part of the Legislature to the concession of their demand. By O'Connell this was termed "moral force;" by those

in authority it was called a menace of "physical force." For several months however no interference took place, and the language of intimidation held by the principal speakers on these occasions, increased in openness and vehemence daily. At length, upon the 7th of October, a proclamation by the Lord-Lieutenant in council appeared, prohibiting a meeting which had been appointed to take place at Clontarf on the following day. Military preparations were taken to enforce acquiescence; but the masses who had congregated at the appointed scene, conformed to the advice given them by their leaders, and dispersed quietly. Some days afterwards, O'Connell, his son, and six other persons, were arrested on a charge of conspiracy; and having been admitted to bail, bills of indictment were found against them by the grand jury at the ensuing term. Then began the monster proceedings, as from their voluminous pleading and interminable prolixity of argument, they were justly styled, ending in a trial before Chief Justice Pennefather and a special jury, on the 12th of February, 1844. Each of the defendants claimed his right to be heard by separate counsel; and Mr. Sheil appeared on behalf of Mr. John O'Connell.

For some weeks previous to the trial he had been

labouring under an attack of gout. He sought to escape the pain and prostration incident to a malady which peculiarly incapacitates its victims from continuous intellectual exertion, by resorting to the use of colchicum. But while he thus obtained liberation of his mind from the bondage of suffering, his physical frame remained for the most part a close prisoner, and his limbs were seldom released from their flannel swathings. In this state he set about preparing his speech to evidence. Two days previous to that fixed for its delivery in the Court of Queen's Bench, an application was made to him by some of the gentlemen engaged in reporting the proceedings in the State trials for the London press, respecting the best mode of obtaining a correct copy for the purpose they had in view. Owing to the then existing postal arrangements, they calculated that it would be impossible to give the speech correctly yet so as to be in time for publication in the London morning papers of a particular day, if it were taken in short-hand as it was spoken, and transmitted after transcription at a late hour of the night. In a word, they were anxious to obtain beforehand a copy of what they supposed he had written. Great was their disappointment at being told that, though he had the speech in his head,

nothing but a few memoranda existed on paper. Far greater was their surprise when he undertook to speak it for them by anticipation. With his hands wrapped in flannel he kept moving slowly up and down the room, repeating with great rapidity, and occasionally with his wonted vehemence of intonation, passage after passage, and paragraph after paragraph; then, wearied with the strange and irksome effort, he would lay himself down upon a sofa, and after a short pause re-commence his expostulation with the jury, his allusions to the bench, and his sarcastic apostrophies to the counsel for the Crown. On he went, with but brief interruptions, and few pauses to correct or alter, until the whole was finished and had been accurately noted down. Written out with care, it was sent to the printer, and at the moment when he rose to speak in court, printed copies were in the hands of those who had faithfully rendered his ideas previously. As he proceeded they were thus enabled to mark easily and rapidly any slight variations of phraseology; but these for the most part were so few and trivial as to cause little delay in the correction of the proofs. In the main, the speech was repeated in public verbatim as it had been previously spoken in private, the whole of the arrangement and

nine-tenths of the language being identically the same.

It would be impossible to do justice to this admirable specimen of his forensic oratory by any analysis of the topics dwelt upon, or description of his manner and aspect on the occasion. A few brief extracts must suffice:—

"The Attorney-General, in a statement of eleven or twelve hours' duration, read a long series of extracts from speeches and publications extending over a period of nearly nine months. At the termination of every passage which was cited by him, he gave utterance to expressions of strong resentment against the men by whom sentiments so noxious were circulated, in language most envenomed. If, gentlemen of the jury, his anger was not simulated; if his indignation was not merely official; if he spoke as he felt, how does it come to pass that no single step was ever taken by him for the purpose of arresting the progress of an evil represented by him to be so calamitous? He told you that the country was traversed by incendiaries who set fire to the passions of the people; the whole fabric of society, according to the Attorney-General, for the last nine months has been in a blaze; wherefore then did he stand with folded arms to gaze at the conflagration? Where were the Castle fire-engines—where was the indictment—and of *ex officio* information what had become? Is there not too much reason to think that a project was formed, or rather that a plot was concocted, to decoy the traversers; and that a connivance, amounting almost to sanction, was deliberately adopted as a part of the policy of the Government, in order to betray the traversers into indiscretions of which advantage was in due time to be taken? I have heard it said that it was criminal to tell the people to 'bide their time;' but is the Government to 'bide its time' in order to turn popular excitement

to account? The public prosecutor who gives an indirect encouragement to agitation, in order that he may afterwards more effectually fall upon it, bears some moral affinity to the informer, who provokes the crime from whose denunciation his ignominious livelihood is derived. Has the Attorney-General adopted a course worthy of his great office—worthy of the ostensible head of the Irish bar, and the representative of its intellect in the House of Commons? Is it befitting that the successor of Saurin and of Plunket, who should 'keep watch and ward' from his high station over the public safety, should descend to the performance of functions worthy only of a commissary of the French police; and in place of being the sentinel should become the 'Artful Dodger' of the State? But what, you may ask, could be the motive of the right honourable gentleman for pursuing the course he has adopted, and for which no explanation has been attempted by him? He could not have obtained any advantage signally serviceable to his party by prosecuting Mr. Duffy or Dr. Gray for strong articles in their newspapers; or by prosecuting Mr. Steele or Mr. Tierney for attending unlawful assemblies. He did not fish with lines—if I may avail myself of an illustration derived from the habits of my constituents at Dungarvan—but cast a wide and nicely-constructed trammel-net, in order that by a kind of miraculous catch he might take the great agitator-leviathan himself, a member of Parliament, Mr. Steele, three editors of newspapers, and a pair of priests, in one stupendous haul together. But there was another object still more important to be gained. Had the Attorney-General prosecuted individuals for the use of violent language, or for attending unlawful meetings, each individual would have been held responsible for his own acts; but in a prosecution for conspiracy, which is open to every one of the objections applicable to constructive treason, the acts and the speeches of one man are given in evidence against another, although the latter may have been at the distance of a hundred miles when the circumstances used against him as evidence, and of which he had no sort of cognizance, took

place. He is accused of conspiring with men who certainly never conspired with each other. For those who know anything of newspapers are aware that they are mercantile speculations —the property in them is held by shares—and that the very circumstance of their being engaged in the same politics alienates the proprietors from each other: they pay their addresses to the same mistress, and cordially detest each other."

Addressing himself then to the great question of local self-rule, he asked the jury, as citizens of Dublin, to say whether they thought the Union had ever yet been fairly or fully carried into operation; or whether the promises of which they had all traditionally heard had, either in spirit or letter, been fulfilled? Native institutions had been sacrificed in 1800 for the sake of a participation in the benefits of Empire; but had those benefits been realized? Had even the principles and the practice of constitutional law, long recognised in England, been extended to Ireland? Could such a trial as the present take place there? Had the Chartists been prosecuted for constructive sedition, or for a vague and undefinable conspiracy? That there was deep discontent in the heart of the community could not be denied, and that exciting appeals to that discontent were not unaccompanied with peril, none could question. But was there not a cause for national complaint with which every man of spirit, whatever

might be his class or creed, must sympathize. The same injustice that had stirred the spirit of Swift within him more than a century before, and that at a later period had stimulated the genius of Grattan, still rankled in the country's heart. "The Union was a bargain and a sale: as a sale it was fraudulent, and the bargain was a bad one. Far better terms might have been obtained, and might be still. The first legislative fruits of the Union were Insurrection Acts, which neither extinguished disaffection nor prevented crime. A Government prosecution was directed against the Catholic delegates, and from an exclusive jury the verdict was obtained. But was the Catholic question thereby suppressed? In 1812, an Irish member was appointed Chief Secretary. It was Mr. Peel. You are surprised at the intimation. He was returned for the borough of Cashel, where a very small, but a very discriminating constituency were made sensible of his surpassing merits. It has been remarked that young statesmen who are destined to operate upon England, are first sent to dissect in this country. Mr. Peel had a fine hand and admirable instruments, and he certainly gave proof that he would give the least possible pain in any amputations which he might afterwards have to perform. He was de-

corous—he avoided the language of wanton insult—endeavoured to give us the advantages of a mild despotism, and 'dwelt in decencies for ever.' Yet was his Irish Government, and he must have felt it, an utter failure. He must have seen, even then, the irresistible arguments in favour of Catholic Emancipation; but he had not the moral intrepidity to break from his party, and to do at once what he was compelled to do afterwards. The Insurrection Act was renewed, the disturbances of the country were not diminished, and Ireland continued to reap the bitter fruits of Imperial legislation. A new policy was tried after Mr. Peel had proceeded to England, and the notable expedient was adopted of counteracting the Secretary with the Lord-Lieutenant, and the Lord-Lieutenant with the Secretary. We had Grant against Talbot, and Wellesley against Goulburn. It is almost unnecessary to say, that a Government carried on upon such a principle was incapable of good."

The struggle which terminated in 1829 in Ireland, was followed by one equally menacing in England. Parliamentary Reform was carried by agitation the most threatening; and if to sympathize openly in such agitation were to render men available to a charge of conspiracy, the members of Lord Grey's Cabinet

might have been indicted for that offence. So might the members of the Anti-Corn-Law League and every other association seeking redress of wrongs by appeals to popular feeling. "It is not by ratiocination that a redress of grievances can be obtained. The agitator must sometimes follow the example of the diplomatist, who asks for what is impossible, in order that what is possible may be obtained. The main source of all our grievances, I am convinced, is to be found in the Colonial policy pursued with regard to this country. The Union never has been carried into effect. If it had, Ireland would not be a miserable dependent in the great Imperial family."

In the House of Commons, Lord John Russell moved, on the 13th of February, for a Committee of the whole House to take into consideration the state of Ireland. That country, which two years before had been left by himself and his colleagues in a condition of profound repose, was then filled with troops, whose presence was deemed necessary for the suppression of discontent. "Ireland was occupied, not governed." The man who of all others was beloved by the majority of the people had been found guilty of sedition, and was then awaiting sentence of imprisonment; while burning emotions of resentment,

and enmity to the existing order of things was ascribed to millions to whom he was endeared. Whence did all this proceed? From the failure of the promises of complete assimilation of rights and identification of interests held out with all solemnity, at the time of the Union. In name indeed, the same fundamental laws existed in the two countries; but in practice they were so differently administered as to create two widely dissimilar systems of rule. Trial by jury prevailed in both; but in Ireland persons of certain political and religious opinions were, under the sanction of Government, openly excluded, upon trials of importance.

The elective franchise had, by judicial construction, been limited to a degree never contemplated by the Reform Act in Great Britain; and Lord Stanley and his friends in power had, while in Opposition, done their utmost to restrict that franchise still further. Then with regard to administrative functions. In England, no great sect or class was made to feel that its members were under an interdict, though nominally eligible by law—in Ireland, though Emancipation had for fifteen years been theoretically acknowledged, Catholics of education and talent were as rigorously debarred from office by a Conservative Government as they had ever been. Mr. O'Connell had been prosecuted for exciting

hostility between the two nations; but was there not in England also a man who had striven to set race against race by raising the cry of "Aliens," and had he not been rewarded by the highest honours and emoluments under the Crown? For four successive years Municipal institutions had been wantonly refused, and at last had been grudgingly conceded. Alienated and exasperated by the obstinate adherence to this fatal policy, the people of Ireland had once more called for a dissolution of the Union. How was that cry met? By dismissals from the magistracy and proclamations against public meetings. But remedial measures, or even inquiries into the cause of discontent there had been none. If asked what remedies he would propose, he had no hesitation in naming them. He would give the people of the sister kingdom the full benefit of an impartial and unsectarian administration of the laws, of equal eligibility to office and distinction, and he would give them the same or equal Parliamentary and corporate rights. He would place the Established Church, the Catholic and the Presbyterian on the same footing; and if this could not immediately be accomplished, he would at once begin to make advances towards that object.*

* Speech of Lord John Russell, 13th February, 1844

The motion was resisted by Sir James Graham, Lord Eliott, Sir W. Follett, Lord Stanley, Mr. Shaw, the Irish Attorney-General (Mr. Smith), and Sir Robert Peel. It was supported by Sir George Grey, Mr. Wyse, Lord Howick, Mr. Macaulay, Sir T. Wilde, Mr. Roebuck and by Mr. Sheil, whose address consisted for the most part of an elaborate criticism on the defence of the proceedings of the law advisers of the Crown against Mr. O'Connell and his associates. He commented with much severity on the mutilation of the jurors' panel, and the sectarian character of the jury ultimately chosen. "The judge in Rabelais held a dice-box, and threw alternately for plaintiff and defendant; but he did not load the dice." Names of the witnesses upon the back of the indictment were invariably given to the accused in England; but in the recent State trial at Dublin they had been refused. Above all, a charge of conspiracy was sustained by citations from newspapers, which it was not attempted to prove that the chief conspirator had ever seen or sanctioned. Could any instance of the kind be pointed out in the records of English jurisprudence? For himself, as one who earnestly desired to see perfect amalgamation of races, and the final establishment of an indissoluble union between the two countries, he must reiterate the advice

so often given, that instead of ruling for and by one particular sect, they should legislate for a whole people, and treat all creeds alike. What did the Minister intend to do with these important matters? How was his silence on these points to be interpreted? And why was the Church to be maintained in its superfluous temporalities? Because they were told that it was founded in Christian Protestant truth. Be it so; but he must be permitted to inquire on which side of the Tweed in Great Britain Protestant truth was to be found? "On the northern bank it was impersonated in the member for Perth (Mr. Fox Maule); in the member for Oxford (Sir R. Inglis) on the south. It was Calvinistic in the north, Armenian in the south; it was dressed in a black gown and a white band in the north; in the south it was episcopally enthroned, mitred and crosiered, and arrayed in all the pomp of pontifical attire. On the north it betrayed its affinity to Geneva; on the south it exhibited a strong family resemblance to that Babylonian lady towards whom, under the auspices of Doctor Pusey, its filial affection was beginning to return. If he should ever be disposed to recant the errors which had now continued for 1800 years, in order that, having been permitted to assail the Irish Church from without, he might, as a Protestant, undermine it from within, perhaps the Secretary for

the Home Department, who was a borderer, would tell him on which bank of the Tweed the real truth was to be discovered."

After five nights' debate, Lord John's motion was negatived by 334 to 225.

Throughout his Opposition speeches of this period, there are constant allusions to the differences between High and Low Church views of discipline and doctrine among members of the Church of England, which then engrossed no inconsiderable share of public attention. In conversation the subject continually afforded temptations to his love of jest, and he found it hard to resist them.

His name frequently recurs in the debates of 1844. On Mr. Ward's motion relative to the appropriation of surplus ecclesiastical property, he spoke at some length, urging the precedent set in the mode of dealing with the Clergy Reserves of Canada, and the anomaly of the Protestant Primate having 15,000*l.* a-year, while the Chancellor of Ireland had only 8000*l.* He repudiated vehemently all hostility to the religion of the Establishment, whose subversion he did not seek, only its retrenchment within reasonable bounds: whereupon Sir Robert Inglis, in reply, said he could not be reconciled to a further alienation of

the property of the Church, by the assurance of the right hon. and learned gentleman, "that he wanted her money, not her life,—an argument less usual in Parliament than on the road." Mr. Sheil enjoyed the adroitness of the rejoinder, and laughed heartily at Sir Robert's sarcasm.

Again, we find him taking part on the Sugar Duties, the Charitable Bequests Bill, Irish Registration of Voters, and the Dissenters' Chapels Bill. On the 22nd July he brought under the consideration of the House the subject of our commercial relations with the Barbary States, as affected by recent acts of the French Government.

Much time and attention was absorbed by the question whether the grant to the College of Maynooth ought to be increased and rendered permanent. From the foundation of that institution in 1795, a sum of 9000*l.* had been annually voted in the Estimates for its support. With the view of preventing the recurrence of irritating discussion at each renewal of the grant, Sir R. Peel proposed that it should in future be charged upon the Consolidated Fund; and in order to provide more adequately for the education of the Catholic clergy, the amount was raised to 26,360*l.* a-year. A bill to effect these purposes was introduced

by Ministers; and a special vote of 30,000*l.* was at the same time proposed for the extension of the College. Many animated discussions arose upon the subject, and a strong feeling of dislike was manifested in many of the larger Scotch and English constituencies. The perseverance of Ministers with the measure cost them no little popularity amongst their usual supporters, and unquestionably led the way for the disruption of the Conservative party which not long after ensued. They were supported throughout by the Whigs, who in their turn did not wholly escape the penalty of the course they then pursued. Mr. Sheil warmly approved of the bill, and sustained its promoters in debate.

Another measure, intended as one of conciliation, was introduced by Sir James Graham, in a speech of great ability, on the 9th May: it had for its object the foundation and endowment of three new colleges in Ireland. The ground-plan of these institutions he delineated with clearness and precision, as one formed in strict analogy with that adopted in 1831, for the establishment of primary schools in that country. The fundamental principle of the National System was that of "Mixed Education," as it was popularly termed; and the same principle would be

adhered to in the creation of the higher places of instruction which it was proposed to found. Trinity College afforded ample provision for the intellectual culture of members of the Anglican Church; but from any participation in its varied honours and emoluments, members of the Church of Scotland and of the Church of Rome were rigorously excluded. Degrees might indeed be obtained by Presbyterians and Catholics in the University of Dublin, but all the stimulants to intellectual ambition, and all the aids to the pursuit of learning under pecuniary difficulties, were inflexibly confined to the youth of the wealthier creed. A partial but inadequate remedy had been provided, partly by the munificence of private individuals, and partly by the help of an annual grant from Parliament, in the Academic Institution of Belfast. But its locality and the insufficiency of its means rendered its benefits chiefly local. In the southern and western provinces no educational establishments of a more advanced description could be said to exist. Three new colleges were therefore proposed, whose presidents and professors should be appointed by the Crown, and paid by annual grant from Parliament. No sectarian test should be introduced, nor any peculiar tenets inculcated, as a portion of the regular course of education

prescribed for all; but facilities were to be afforded to the clergy of each persuasion for instructing the students according to their respective creeds: and chairs of theology might be founded by the voluntary munificence of individuals belonging to either the Catholic or Protestant faith.

The plan encountered vehement resistance from the most opposite quarters. Sir Robert Inglis denounced it as a "gigantic scheme of Godless education." Mr. O'Connell adopted the same objection, and condensed Sir Robert's denunciation into the epithet of "Godless colleges," by which he stigmatised the new institutions. On the other hand, warm commendations of the design were expressed by Lord Palmerston on behalf of the Whigs, and by Mr. Wyse, Mr. Redington, and others of the Irish Liberal members. Mr. Sheil, while he gave the measure his support, refused to accept it as adequate compensation for the continued exclusion of Dissenters and Catholics from participation in the advantages that belonged to the University of Dublin. With the theological faculty of Trinity College he had no wish to interfere; but a great portion of its rich endowments had been made by Parliament and by the Crown from time to time out of national property;

and he maintained that the sons of the people, without regard to religious distinctions, had an inherent and indefeasible right to compete for the honours and to share the benefits of that noble institution. Ireland had but one University, and during the lifetime of the existing generation it was impossible she could have another which could vie in intellectual prestige with that which had been so long established. A second University might be created by statute, it was true; but it must long continue to be but a shadow, subject to invidious comparison with that which possessed all the substantial claims to popular regard. It would be an inferior institution from the outset, and would mark, in the estimation of the people, the intention of perpetuating old jealousies and distinctions.

"It was said that the Catholic is admissible to all the advantages of Trinity College. Not so; he is suffered to enter as a student, I admit, but he is forbidden to touch or taste the golden fruits that grow upon the tree of knowledge. He ought not to have been admitted there, or when let in he ought to have had the full enjoyment of all the benefits of the College. The system was a relic of the worst of times. At present the only pecuniary advantage a Catholic had was to be admitted a sizar. After the lapse of two years he might indeed become a candidate for a scholarship; but to do so he must relinquish his religion. How shameful it is that in your University you should have this wretched decoy to apostacy! Leave Trinity College as it now

stands, and you leave a monument of ascendency. What I want is perfect equality between Catholic and Protestant."

At a subsequent stage of the measure he again adverted to this—with him a favourite view of the case. He urged the many considerations, social and national, in favour of throwing open the University, founded by Elizabeth, at Dublin, to all persuasions, rather than providing substitutes of less dignity and celebrity in three provincial towns to which Dissenters and Catholics might repair.

"Your provincial academies will be marked with all the characteristics of mediocrity, which will only render the elevation of Trinity College more conspicuous by the inferiority with which it will be surrounded. How stunted and dwarfed the groves of our new academies when compared with the rich luxuriance of the gardens of Trinity! I had a thousand times rather you had applied your 18,000*l.* a-year to the establishment of new fellowships and new professorships in the metropolitan and national institution; if you had so done, Englishmen would have got a value—a value in peace—a value in contentment—a value in pacificatory results, for their money. . . . . I will not deny that the advantages of education will be distributed to a certain extent by your new plan; but the measure, though for political purposes it may succeed, yet as a message of peace it will be a failure. If you (addressing Sir Robert Peel) were a native of Ireland, suffering under the consequences of the exclusive system which there prevails, would you not demand equality—equality in all respects—social, political, official, and ecclesiastical? You know in your heart—you know that that would be your answer—you know that nothing else would satisfy you, and you know that nothing else will or ought to satisfy us."

Sir Robert Peel expressed his disappointment and regret at the tone of this speech. He had made many sacrifices, and alienated the support of many friends in the sincere desire to do justice to the Roman Catholics; and there was no sacrifice he was not prepared to make for that object and for the sake of promoting harmony between all classes of the community. But what would now be said? Regardless of the feelings and fears of their friends, Ministers had hoped, by proposing certain measures, to make an impression on the Irish mind; but instead of this, the leading Roman Catholic member in the House of Commons got up and told them that unless they went ten times as far as they had yet gone, it would avail nothing; that unless conciliation were pursued to the extent which he pointed out, dangerous disaffection would still exist in Ireland. Several modifications were proposed by Lord John Russell, tending to meet the objections put forward by the Catholic Bishops; some of these were eventually adopted, and the bill passed both Houses by large majorities.

Soon after the Act had passed for establishing Provincial Colleges in Ireland, Mr. Sheil happened to meet at dinner an American gentleman, who thought

fit to indulge in a series of attacks on the various forms of religion still revered amongst us. There were some temperate deprecations of the scoffing tone of the stranger, from others who were present; but Mr. Sheil remained silent until Catholicity became in its turn the subject of ridicule and invective. He then said:—

"Pray, Sir, may I ask to what sect do you yourself belong?"

"To the general body of enlightened believers in the great and comprehensive truths of *un*revealed religion, who look upon all the liturgies and confessions of the Old World with impartial pity as the husks of withered superstition," was the gentle and modest reply.

"Perhaps you would allow me to ask you another question—Are you acquainted with Sir Robert Peel?"

"I have not yet had the distinguished honour of making the acquaintance of that very remarkable man."

"The circumstance is much to be regretted, for I am sure if you had, that he would have lost no time in offering you a professorship of divinity in one of what are called his Godless colleges."

He was at all times eager in asserting, on behalf of his friend and relative Mr. Wyse, the merit of having, more than any other person, contributed to

the establishment of a better system of National Education in Ireland. He dwelt with marked satisfaction on the graceful tribute paid to him by Sir James Graham in the course of the discussion on the New Colleges, and bore his cordial testimony to its justice and truth. Mr. Wyse felt naturally much gratified, and soon afterwards tried to enlist his aid in advocating the necessity of some amendment in another department of public instruction—that, namely, of Legal Education; but his instances proved unavailing. Sheil would not undertake any part in the controversy; and when somewhat further urged upon the point he said, with an expression of comic seriousness,—"The fact is, I have scruples; honest folk find it hard enough to keep a roof over their heads with the present race of what you call half-educated lawyers; but there would be no such thing as living in this world if they were more highly accomplished in their destructive art than they already are; they know a deuced deal too much. I am all against you."

The questions long pending between the Colonial Office and the New Zealand Company on more than one occasion gave rise, during the session of 1845, to animated discussions, in which the administrative

conduct of Lord Stanley was unfavourably contrasted with that of Lord John Russell by the leading members of Opposition. On the 17th of June, the whole of the subject in controversy was brought under the attention of the House, in a long and able speech by Mr. Charles Buller. The resolutions he moved were supported by Mr. M. Milnes, Lord Howick, Mr. Hawes, Lord John Russell, and Mr. Sheil, who had taken no little pains to make himself master of the subject. This he had been not long before requested to do by some of his friends, who took peculiar interest in the grievances of the Company. They almost despaired of getting him to undertake the labour of wading through the mass of details with which they were themselves familiar, and during a morning visit one of them somewhat despondingly said that, without becoming acquainted with the contents of certain ponderous volumes, it would be unreasonable to ask him to do more than to apply his mind to one or two branches of the case. But this did not suit his humour, and he asked impatiently, "Where are the books?" He was told they were in a carriage at the door. "Oh, bring them in then by all means, and let me see them." Undismayed by their bulk, he undertook to set about quarrying for

himself such materials as he deemed suitable for his purpose, and when the time came every feature that he intended to present to the House had with marvellous rapidity been chiselled and polished to the minutest particular. The gentleman who had enlisted his energies in the Company's cause met him in the lobby on the first evening of the discussion. The moment he recognised him he said, "I am ready, but I must wait for a proper opportunity." It did not arise however that evening, and on the following they chanced to meet again, as the adjourned debate was about to begin. "I'll do it to-night," he said, "about half-past nine or ten; I wont speak sooner." He fulfilled his promise highly to the satisfaction of his friends, although he seemed to have waited in vain for the arguments to which his speech was in some respects designed as a reply. But the House refused to agree to the motion, which he described as having for its object to rescue the colony from the effects of Lord Stanley's "splenetic authoritativeness and factious sophistication."

The precarious state of his son's health had during the summer caused him much uneasiness. Notwithstanding all the care of physicians and of friends, day by day more unfavourable symptoms grew manifest

even to a parent's unbelieving eye. The ordinary resources of medicine proving ineffectual, a change of climate was recommended; and hoping against hope that some magic might be found in the air of a southern latitude, it was resolved to try the effect of a winter's residence in Madeira. On the 10th of September, Mr. and Mrs. Sheil, accompanied by Miss Power, left London, and arrived, after a somewhat tedious voyage, at their destination about a fortnight sooner than the invalid, who, with the Honourable —— Petre, reached the island on the 9th of October. A house pleasantly situated near the town of Funchal had been chosen for the residence of the family, and favourable anticipations were at first entertained from the effect of the change; but these speedily gave way to sadder feelings. The youthful sufferer's constitution had for some time been wholly undermined, and towards the beginning of November his strength began visibly to give way, although he was the last to become conscious of the inexorable fate that hung over him. It was not without many a bitter struggle that his father at length assented to the fatal intelligence being communicated to his unconscious son. The painful scenes which followed need not be depicted here. Their duration was not long, and on the

10th of November the conflict between youthful life and premature decay came to an end. The remains of the young man were followed to his grave by his father and his friend Mr. Petre. He had not attained his twenty-third year; and his untimely removal cast a deep and lasting shade over his father's remaining years.

Mr. Sheil continued to reside with his family at Madeira for a considerable time after the loss of his son. He lived in the most complete seclusion, seldom going out, and avoiding all intercourse with the society of the place. To strangers, when they had the opportunity of observing him, his appearance was strikingly suggestive of the gloomy and absorbed condition of his mind. He did not seem to be in ill health, but looked like one who had suffered much, and who desired to shun the intrusion of that which is often sincerely meant to be, but is seldom capable of making itself felt by such a man, as sympathy.

Before Christmas the news reached the Island that Sir Robert Peel and his colleagues had resigned. The circumstances which had prepared the way for this event are too recent to need minute enumeration. Against the convictions slowly wrought in his mind by popular argument and official experience, the Premier had

struggled for some time. Bound as he was by the strongest ties of party honour and personal consistency to maintain the policy of Protection, every ordinary motive conspired to deter him from the contemplation of a change of measures which must inevitably shake the confidence of the most confiding in his sagacity as a statesman, and alienate the support of many who had hitherto loyally adhered to him. The recollections moreover, of 1829, must have tended powerfully to enhance in his mind the difficulty of taking such a course. Four of his former colleagues* were again associated with him in the Cabinet; and upon the adherence of a majority of the remainder he could probably rely. But neither unanimity in the Council nor success in Parliament could, he well knew, avert from him the obloquy and reproach of suddenly changing the flag under which he had himself enlisted a great party. But the exigency grew every day more pressing. The food of millions was smitten by a mysterious blight. The shadow of a nation's death fell upon him; and pride, ambition, consistency as a partisan, all gave way before the oppressive sense of a terrible responsibility. He told his colleagues that

* The Duke of Wellington, Lord Aberdeen, Lord Lyndhurst, and Mr. Goulburn.

the ports must be thrown open, and that having done that, they must prepare to remove the sluice-gates altogether. The President of the Council Lord Wharncliffe, the Secretary for the Colonies Lord Stanley, and the Duke of Wellington, did not disguise their dissent from these recommendations. This perhaps was a relief rather than a disappointment. Lord John Russell's letter to the electors of the City of London, renouncing all further idea of compromise on the question, appeared on the 22nd of November. After that letter the Premier "felt that he would have appeared to be adopting the proposition of the noble Lord, and he would have been open to the taunt of a servile acquiescence in his views."* Individually he was prepared to persevere notwithstanding, but the disunion of his Cabinet seemed to relieve him from such a necessity. He need not surrender his sword, it would be enough for him to break it and retire.

All that the English public learned during the early days of December was the fact that the Conservative Government was dissolved, and that Lord John Russell had been sent for. Conjecture and rumour, dark insinuations and random guesses as to the real cause, filled the public prints. A sheaf of these was

* Speech of Sir Robert Peel, 19th January, 1846.

carried by the first packet that left England in December to Madeira, and brought to the listless exile there, a strange mingling of regrets and hopes. What would he not have given for a day in London—for one half-hour at Brookes's! His curiosity became painfully excited. Would Lord John be able to form a Government? The Whigs, of course, would be unanimous, with the exception of Lord Melbourne, who perhaps would disapprove of "total and immediate repeal." But he was growing old, and did not probably desire again to mingle actively in affairs; and he would be sure to acquiesce, even though he did not wholly approve. How many of Peel's Cabinet would go with him; and how many would join the country gentlemen in opposition? O'Connell would, no doubt, support the new Administration; the excitement of the monster meetings had subsided; he was weary of contention with Young Ireland; and his liberation by the decision of the House of Lords in the previous year had sunk deeply into his mind. Would office be offered to Cobden and his friends? These and a multitude of other vain surmises chased each other through his waking dreams; and in broken ejaculations, when alone, or sitting with her from whom he had no secrets, he gave expression to con-

flicting thoughts regarding what was likely to occur. And for himself—what would be his own position? Would he have any, or in the jostle and scramble of a change of parties would every post of honour be seized upon by some Lord or lacquey on the spot? Absent—would he be forgotten?

The arrival of the next packet put an end to all doubtings and conjectures. The refusal of Lord Grey at the last moment to enter the Cabinet with Lord Palmerston as Foreign Secretary, had rendered abortive Lord John's attempt to form an Administration, and Sir Robert Peel had resumed power with the whole of his colleagues, Lord Stanley and Lord Wharncliffe excepted. It seemed as though a new lease of power had been given to the Conservative Cabinet, and that upon the eve of triumphantly asserting their principles the Whigs had thrown away an opportunity not likely soon again to occur. As the indistinct echoes of the impending change died away, the exiled mourner sunk back into the apathy from which he had been but half aroused, and he seemed to be unwilling to contemplate the idea of returning home. During the first three months of 1846 he preferred remaining at Madeira, by the climate of which he was led to believe that the health of his

wife had been considerably improved. Her solicitude on his account did not permit her, however, to encourage the tendency to inaction which she saw stealing over his mind; and when at the beginning of April they learned from public and private sources that, notwithstanding all that had occurred in December, the continuance of Sir Robert Peel in office was daily regarded in England as very doubtful, Mrs. Sheil strongly urged upon her husband the expediency of returning to England. She well knew that for him there was and could be no mental restorative but that which had so long been the excitement and occupation of his life. She believed that his political career was not ended, and that a higher meed of recognition awaited his many services to his country and his party than he had yet obtained. Her affection rekindled his ambition. On the 22nd of April they sailed for Cadiz in a vessel named the Grace Darling, which at the time plied between the island and that port, whence they returned by the ordinary steamer to Southampton.

On his return to England he found the condition of parties wholly changed. The Treasury bench was still occupied by those who had for the two preceding years led the Conservative party; but the party fol-

lowed them no longer. Acknowledged leaders they could hardly be said as yet to have any; for though, as was wittily said, Disraeli had invented Lord George Bentinck for the purpose, the value of the invention was hardly yet recognised, as for its cleverness in conception, and its intrinsic power it really deserved to be. Throughout the abortive debates on the abolition of the Corn Law in 1846, none but a man of genius could possibly have enlisted on the losing side anything like interest, or could reanimate a deserted cause.

In the debate on the second reading of the Irish Arms Bill, Mr. Sheil eloquently reviewed Sir R. Peel's career, and justified the Liberals in rejecting the coercive measure proposed by Ministers, and in uniting with the Protectionists in a course which would necessarily drive them from power. "It was his firm persuasion that the criminalities of Ireland ought to be attributed to the moral distemper, of which a Government utterly destitute of the confidence and support of the people never fails to be productive. He would have occasion to animadvert upon the policy pursued by the Prime Minister in reference to Ireland. It had often been his misfortune to have thought it his duty to do so. But in doing so he had never forgotten that it was to the right honourable gentleman himself he was

indebted for the privilege of pronouncing his condemnation to his face. And as in his highest and most palmy state, when he stood at the head of that great Conservative party which it cost him so many years to construct, and which in a few months he had reduced to such utter dilapidation, he had always endeavoured to avoid the use of any phrase which could justly be considered as wantonly offensive; and now that the right honourable baronet had apparently undergone some temporary change of fortune—now that in his descent from the meridian, a cloud tinged, perhaps with light, but still a cloud, was passing over him —it should be his peculiar care that the language of strong animadversion should be dissociated from disrespect. He did not despair of the right honourable gentleman. He entertained a hope that he who had had the virtue and the courage to dash to pieces that Sliding Scale which cost him so much fruitless ingenuity to elaborate, would recant his Irish heresies at last, and to his celebrated inconsistencies would give a glorious consummation. Perhaps he had used an infelicitous expression. True consistency does not depend upon a servile subserviency to your own fallacies or to the passions of your party. The truly consistent statesman does not so much consider what

it has been his mistake to have done, as what it has become his duty to do. He does not look back at his own yesterdays, but looks forward to his country's glorious morrow. The welfare of that country is not his chief object, only because it is his only one. Fixing his eyes on that solitary point—bright, eternal, and unsetting—however the wind may blow, and however the current may set, by that immutable light he steers his apparently irregular, but in truth, undeviating course. Having performed the pleasurable office of hypothetical panegyric, he came to the discharge of a distasteful task, that of finding grievous fault with the Irish policy of the right honourable gentleman. When the Catholic question was adjusted, it could not be doubted that he was fully resolved to carry out the principle on which the enfranchisement of millions of his fellow-citizens rested; and that had he remained in power he would not have attempted to stunt the growth of that principle, or to impede its development into the obvious results into which it must at last inevitably expand. In his memorable speech, when introducing the Relief Bill in 1829, Sir R. Peel had enumerated the various measures of coercion enacted since the Union, and expressed a hope that the time for measures of that character had

passed away for ever. Driven from office, however, in the succeeding year, he reunited himself with the most immitigable antagonists of Irish freedom. A reconciliation having been effected, the right honourable baronet conceived it to be consistent with his sense of public duty to accommodate himself to the sublimated Protestantism of his Parliamentary associates on the Speaker's sinister side, and to adopt the policy prescribed to him from the cloisters of Oxford, and the heaths—the exceedingly barren and desolate heaths—of Kent. He accordingly did his utmost (should he say, his worst?) to obstruct—a word once pronounced so emphatically in that House, and which still rang in his ears—to obstruct the Whig Government in their endeavours to carry out the principle of Emancipation, and to enlarge the political rights of the Irish people. The other evening his right honourable friend the member for Taunton (Mr. Labouchere), provoked by an exceedingly unprovoked aggression, preferred that charge; and that charge can be most readily established. Reference to two examples would suffice: the Municipal Act, and the Registration Bill of Lord Stanley. The former, after years of frustration, had been passed in a mutilated form. Recently indeed an intimation had been given by the Govern-

ment of their willingness to amend it, so as to assimilate corporate privileges in the two countries; but what a satire was their present on their former conduct! The Irish Registration Bill was still a greater discredit to Ministers. By that Bill the constituencies of Ireland would have been annihilated; but as soon as Ministers came into power in 1841, it was thrown aside. Session after session the Secretary for the Home Department had promised a Registration Bill. Yet now, on the eve of a general election, instead of a Bill to adjust a subject by which the people still continue to be agitated, a measure admitted to be one of a most rigorous and unconstitutional character even by its originators and abettors, was brought forward by the Government. To return to the rapid narration of events. The right honourable baronet having been placed at the head of her Majesty's councils, found himself surrounded with difficulties of his own creation. He became entangled in a web, in which he had caught the Whigs, and was perplexed in the inextricable maze which he had spun out for himself. He was forced to select as colleagues men who were objects of peculiar disrelish to the Irish people. One of them was said to have repented of a very unhappy phrase; and Lord Chan-

cellor Lyndhurst had relapsed into Mr. Sergeant Copley. But the phrase that escaped him was not forgotten. The bow was unbent and the string was relaxed; but the deadly shaft adhered."

After glancing at the judicial appointments in Ireland, Mr. Sheil proceeded: "The Prime Minister endeavoured to countervail his doings by his sayings; but, although we are told by Shakspeare that it is a kind of good deed to say well, between his doings and sayings there was an antithesis so marked, that his professions excited the alarm of one party without creating the confidence of the other. Seven millions went into opposition. Two-thirds of the Irish members, every man of the Liberal party in Ireland who could write with exciting force, or speak with contagious fervour, the whole of the Liberal press, the whole of the Catholic hierarchy and priesthood, were ranged against the Government Agitation burst forth with unprecedented violence. The Repeal Magistrates—miserable expedient—were dismissed. A bad measure was rendered still worse by the forensic subtleties and Lincoln's Inn sophistications with which it was defended. Then came the monster meetings, followed by the monster prosecution, insidiously conceived, and conducted in a spirit of oppres-

sion. The world beheld the leader and liberator of a Catholic nation tried by a jury exclusively composed of Protestant tradesmen, who were absurdly called his peers; and that under the auspices of a Prime Minister by whom Catholic Emancipation had been carried, and the English Special Jury Act had been reformed. At last the long series of ignominious proceedings terminated in a discomfiture of the Government, of which there was no former example—terminated with a denunciation pronounced by the Chief Justice of England, from the highest seat of judicature in the world, and in the conversion of the porch of a prison-house into an arch of triumph, through which the most remarkable man in Europe, whom they had had the temerity to call 'a convicted conspirator,' was given back to the embrace of an enthusiastic and devoted people. Such was a sketch of the history of the Administration down to the year 1844 in Ireland. From that time Government had existed but in name in that country. How was it possible, when justice had committed suicide, when authority had perpetrated a felony upon itself, when those who were entrusted with the enforcement of the law had brought it into scorn,—how was it possible, when these events affected all other

classes, that their influence should not reach the lowest grades of the community? That when the moral atmosphere was thus charged with contagion the poor peasant should remain unaffected? That amid the general turbulence, the hurly-burly into which the country was cast by the Government, they who have the greatest grievances to complain of—they who groan beneath the wrongs which we are told by the highest of all authorities 'make the wise man mad,' should not break out into those excesses for which their incarceration after sunset was prescribed, with all the pertinacity of baffled empiricism, as a sovereign and unfailing cure? A previous Administration had been differently constituted, and it had produced opposite results—the decline of political agitation, the abatement of religious antipathies, and the diminution of prædial crime. But if this new measure of repression was really, in the opinion of its authors, indispensable, why was it not introduced at the commencement of the session, and pressed without delay? It was surely ready; it only consisted of three pages; and a Coercion Bill might be produced as an impromptu in the law office of Dublin Castle. They were *improvisatores* in oppression there. After it had been read a first time in the House of

Lords, why was it not proceeded with? The Home Secretary had declared it to be of the most imperative necessity and of the most instantaneous need. A protection for life ought surely then to have been imposed before taking off a protection on corn. But the procrastination of Ministers refuted their own professions. They were silenced by the almanac; and by the dates of their proceedings in the measure, its necessity was demonstratively disproved. When the Arms Bill was forced through Parliament, three years before, in defiance of predictions and expostulations, and after infinite waste of time, Ministers declared that in the branding of a blunderbuss they had found a panacea for Irish disquietude and insubordination, yet now the Secretary for Ireland (Lord Lincoln) admitted that the Arms Bill had failed; and so assuredly would this. If crime by night could be prevented, how would they preclude its commission by day? If they locked up the owls, what would they do with the falcons? No statesman had ever attempted, even in the most troubled times, to enact such a law for England. Lancashire was full of secret conspiracy in 1819, and the agrarian outrages in Kent and other counties in 1830 filled the minds of the peaceable inhabitants, to use the words of the

'Annual Register,' 'with horror and dismay.' Yet no bill like the present was ever dreamed of by the Tory Cabinet of either period; but the truth was, that the instincts of domination were not yet eradicated from the minds of those in power; and though the great distinctions of race and of condition had ceased to exist, 'a Pale' was still kept up in the statute-book."

At length the House divided, when there appeared for the second reading 219, against it 292. On the following day Sir Robert Peel resigned; and to Lord John Russell was confided the task of forming a new Administration.

CHAPTER XXI.

1846—1850.

Lord John Russell Premier—Mastership of the Mint—"Anatomist without a corpse"—Reproached for being silent—Dissatisfied with his position—County occupation franchise—Question of the Irish Viceroyalty—Marriage of deceased wife's sister—Anecdotes—Committee on ministers' money—Bust taken by C. Moore.

PREVIOUS to the formation of the new Government Mr. Sheil's anticipation was, that the office of Judge-Advocate, which he had held when Lord Melbourne resigned in 1841, would again be offered to him.* There were some amongst his friends who did not hesitate to advise him to decline such a proposal, if made, and to assert his claim to be included amongst those who were to form the new Cabinet. But how-

* Letter to M. Staunton, Esq., 30th June, 1846.

ever gratifying such suggestions may have been to his personal feelings, and however calculated to feed the flame of his future ambition, his keen sense of the hindrances that still beset his way, and the clear estimate he formed of the difficulties which his party had to encounter at the time, deterred him from yielding to such suggestions. He was not a little pleased at finding, two days after, that the Mastership of the Mint had been reserved for him. It had always been regarded as one of the offices which ranked next to the Cabinet, and like that of Secretary at War, Paymaster of the Forces, and Secretary for Ireland, had sometimes been held by Cabinet Ministers, and sometimes not. He naturally felt that this unsolicited step in official promotion was an honourable recognition of the services he had rendered, and a justification of the hopes entertained on his behalf by others, that farther advancement was yet before him.

Lord Bessborough was appointed Viceroy of Ireland, and Mr. Labouchere Chief Secretary. The former chose for his private secretary Mr. Corry Connellan. The first time Sheil met him afterwards he said, "Be as courteous as you please in receiving postulants for patronage, but never smile—every smile is construed as an *assumpsit.*"

During the famine, a nobleman of large estates in Ireland had rendered himself somewhat remarkable by the publicity of the attentions he paid to a lady of great personal attractions. Many of his friends reproached him with not taking a more exclusive interest at such a time in public affairs. Their remonstrances proved unavailing, and Sheil resolved to try the effect of a joke. "What is the armorial motto of the family?" he asked, "for whatever it is, it must after this year be changed, and I can tell you what the new one will be—*Sine Cerere Venus.*"

Upon the appointment of Lord Clarendon to the Lord-Lieutenancy of Ireland, Mr. Labouchere succeeded him as President of the Board of Trade. Various candidates were named for the Chief Secretaryship of Ireland, which had thus become vacant; and amongst others Mr. Sheil, who, had he claimed it, could hardly have been passed over. Many considerations, however, disinclined him to think of such an office. He disliked the drudgery of multiplied details, and knew that for the performance of the laborious duties of such a post at the period in question, uncertain health would form an insuperable obstacle; but there was something more. He knew too well the intense worship of rank and wealth to

which his fellow-countrymen are devoted, and he likewise knew the inveteracy with which, more especially in the Irish metropolis, the love of depreciation and ridicule seeks its food, at the expense of those who have come of the people. "There is no toleration in Ireland for a man who has raised himself to eminence without being rich. Everything he does is damned ere it is done. If he gives away a place to a young man of family, he is accused of toadying the landlords; if he calls a friend whom he has known and trusted to his side, he is denounced as a jobber; if he ventures to be hospitable, he is sure to offend many whom he forgets to invite, and if he omits to entertain, he is held up as a miser. It would be hard enough for any Irishman to fill the office at such a time; but for a man like me, without title, patrimony, or connexions, it would be a hopeless business." And he would then proceed to give a caricature of himself riding into town from the Secretary's Lodge, with the comments of those whom he passed on his way along the quays.

At the general election of 1849, he announced his intention of again standing for Dungarvan. He was encountered by the opposition of Tories and Repealers. By the one he was held up to reproach as the advocate

of Free Trade; by the other, as the enemy of popular rights and liberties. With much humour he illustrated the anomalous position taken by his opponents. What interest, he asked, had the people of a seafaring town in high rents and dear food? or what identity of ultimate purpose could there be between the followers of Lord Stanley and those of O'Connell? As for the severance of the Legislative Union by peaceful means, after it had subsisted for forty years, and with the undivided weight of Protestant intelligence and property devoted to its maintenance, the thing was impossible. A revolution was the only method whereby it could ever be achieved; but resort to such an alternative was repudiated by the leaders of the movement as criminal. In 1834, when all the benefits of Catholic Emancipation were still withheld, and it seemed doubtful to some what part the Protestant middle classes might take, the case was different. But ten years had since elapsed, during the greater portion of which the question had been suffered to rest in abeyance, and in the course of which civil exclusion had been practically obliterated by the Government of which he was a member. The Church question had not indeed been settled in the sense that he desired; but it seemed to have ceased to occupy

the popular mind; while the municipal question had, after a protracted struggle, been at length brought to a successful issue. He could not be a party to practising any deception, or trifling with popular credulity. His claim to be returned as an Irish representative was founded on a long life of devotion to the Liberal cause. "It would be strange indeed if the Repeal should obliterate all remembrance of past services. If such did not constitute a claim, he owned that he had none; but he would not win votes by making irredeemable promises, or by pretending to look for the realization of Repeal, which he felt persuaded was but a splendid phantom."

A phrase like this was sure to be caught up in a time of excitement, and to be made a watchword in every mouth. The mob were not long in rendering the idea literally, and according to their keen sense of the ridiculous turning it to account. An effigy arrayed in ghostly garb, with features to represent those of the orator, was paraded before his hotel with the inscription on its breast—"A splendid phantom."

His opponent was Mr. J. F. Maguire, the proprietor of the *Cork Examiner*, a local journal of much influence. The contest occasioned considerable excitement, the more so as the Rev. Dr. Halley, the parish

priest, took part with the Master of the Mint, while others of the Catholic clergy in the neighbourhood espoused the cause of his opponent. After a sharp struggle, a majority appeared in favour of the former.

The autumn of 1847 he passed chiefly at Hastings, of which he was particularly fond. In one of his letters, written from that place, he mentions the benefit in health which both he and Mrs. Sheil had derived from the restorative efficacy of the sea air. "I have myself," he adds, "been greatly served by the breath of the ocean. As I look on hundreds of ships coming up and going down the Channel, I feel the Repeal to be a phantom, but not a very splendid one."*

A friend who in Parliament had usually supported the Whigs, had acquired some distinction by the effective manner in which he had opposed certain measures of a repressive character, which he considered were too rigorous in their enactments, some annoyance was in consequence expressed by more than one of those who occupied subordinate positions in the Government. The gentleman in question having, in conversation, expressed his surprise that such a feeling should have

* To James Galway, Esq., 31st August, 1847.

been manifested, Mr. Sheil playfully apologised for what may be termed the *unutterable* anxieties of minor office. "As for you," he said, "you have shown that you can if you will make yourself formidable; but remember," he added, with a laugh, "those who make themselves formidable must prepare for a long fast."

"I never had the pleasure," says Mr. Leigh Hunt, "of seeing Mr. Sheil but once, when he did me the honour of answering in person a question respecting the Mint. I then saw before me one of the little great men of whom one reads so often in history, and I thought how well, in spite of time and the gout, his conversation answered to the idea given of him by his speeches—I mean as to life and freshness—for he did not affect anything rhetorical. I little thought so much vitality was about to be extinguished, and this too in the genial South."*

For the wit and eloquence of Mr. Disraeli he often expressed the highest admiration. It was the fashion at the time among his own party, especially amongst the mediocrities and conventionalists, of which the bulk of all parties are made up, to decry the talents of one who had seized on political position by a Parliamentary *coup de main*, and seemed determined to retain it, in

* Letter from Mr. Leigh Hunt, 10th December, 1853.

defiance of all the solemn protests of dowagerhood and dulness, by his own indomitable will. At the anger of the born-statesmen, that a great party should be led by a man without connexions or landed title to bear rule over a landed Parliament, Sheil laughed heartily. But with those few fellow-plebeians who, like himself, were not ashamed of their order, the triumph of Mr. Disraeli was felt to be the triumph of unfriended, unaided, untolerated genius over the most relentless of all monopolies—that of political caste. "It is wonderful," he would exclaim, in audible soliloquy; "I have had some experience of what he has undergone and overcome, and I think it wonderful." But when, like other men, Mr. Disraeli failed upon some uninteresting subject, to avoid the imputation of being tedious, Sheil did not affect to feel interested or amused. One evening, when he had consumed more time than usual in discussing some commercial question without his accustomed brilliancy or success, the Master of the Mint, who was standing behind the Speaker's chair, was asked by a friend how it happened that the witty member for Bucks no longer made them laugh as he used to do in 1846? "You forget that times are changed," said Sheil: "Peel is no longer in office, and there is no one else worth dis-

secting. The fault is not in the operator. He is an anatomist without a corpse."

Towards the end of March, 1848, considerable apprehensions were entertained regarding the effect of certain writings and speeches addressed to the working classes, then suffering severely from want of employment, by Mr. Feargus O'Connor. Meeting him one day in the lobby of the House of Commons, Mr. Sheil drew him aside, and expostulated with him in a friendly but warning tone on the mischief he might heedlessly do to others as well as to himself. Remonstrance appearing to prove ineffectual, he said at length, in low but monitory accents, "Well, you will take your own course; but remember, I tell you as a friend the Home Office has its eye upon you, and you may regret when it is too late your unwillingness to take prudent advice."

"Oh!" exclaimed O'Connor, raising his voice, "this comes well from the *Right Honourable* Richard Lalor Sheil, whom I once heard upon the hustings when he was only like myself—a plain *honourable* gentleman—tell the people what their rights were, and that if after due demand they could not get them by peaceful and constitutional means, he would not be found to shrink from leading them when other efforts must be tried."

"But did you never hear," said Mr. Sheil, "what the people said to me afterwards? They told me they knew very well that I had no more notion of taking up arms, or leading them to the field, than Feargus O'Connor."

A resolution, condemnatory of the policy of Ministers towards the West Indian Colonies, was moved on the 13th of June, by Sir John Pakington, who argued that the produce of free cultivation could not fairly be exposed to competition with that of slave labour. He was supported upon various grounds by members differing from each other widely in their general views and opinions. Mr. Hume and Mr. Goulburn, Mr. Gladstone and Lord George Bentinck, for once were found voting together; and after many nights' debate Ministers had only a majority of 260 to 245. Writing on the following day to a friend in Ireland, Mr. Sheil thus alludes to the circumstance—"Last night the Government had a majority of fifteen only. Seven Irishmen deserted us, and indeed there was such a combination against the Government that I am astonished that we were not in a minority—only four of Peel's followers voted with us, the rest joined Lord George Bentinck. But I believe that we are safe for the session. I do not think that any measure will be propounded by which such a coalition of appa-

rently adverse and repugnant elements will take place. Not a single Irish Tory voted with us; so much for all their professions to Lord Clarendon."*

A Select Committee having been appointed to inquire into the operation of the laws respecting Ministers' Money in Ireland, with a view to their amendment, and whether any other and what fund might be rendered available for the purposes to which that tax had hitherto been applied, they proceeded on the 23rd of May to elect a chairman. The Conservative members present supported the nomination of Sir John Young, while the Liberals, who were in a majority of one, voted for the Master of the Mint. The proceedings of the Committee were continued by adjournment until the end of July. Their report, which was drawn up by the Chairman, gave in a succinct form the substance of the evidence taken on the subject, and presented with clearness and precision the reasons why an alteration in the existing law seemed to be needful. By the 17th and 18th Charles II., chap. 7, a tax of five per cent. upon the valuation of all houses situated in the cities of Dublin, Cork, Limerick, Waterford, and Kilkenny, and the towns of Clonmel, Drogheda, and Kinsale, was im-

* Extract of a letter to James Galway, Esq., 30th June, 1848.

posed for the payment of the clergy of the Established Church therein. None of the towns north of the Boyne were included in the provisions of the statute; "the Protestant Dissenters of the North of Ireland, a powerful and influential body, being thus wholly exempted from an ecclesiastical charge, which the Roman Catholics of Ireland had always considered to be a grievance." Several of the parochial clergy examined by the Committee had expressed their strong desire that some means might be found other than Ministers' Money for the payment of their incomes, as they felt that it was calculated to place them continually in an invidious position among those of the community who did not attend their ministration, and thereby to impair their power of general usefulness. Various suggestions for the commutation of the charge, or for its redemption either optional or compulsory, had been made, as well as a proposal for placing the amount (about 15,000*l.* a-year) upon the Consolidated Fund, all of which the Report negatived as inadmissible. The only alternative that remained was, to render the annual amount in question a primary charge upon the funds vested in the Irish Ecclesiastical Commissioners. Some conflict of testimony prevailed as to the

adequacy of their income to meet the purposes for which it had originally been assigned to them in trust, if such an additional liability were now imposed. But, inasmuch as an augmentation of income might ere long be anticipated, by the falling in of certain bishoprics and benefices to the extent of 44,857*l.* a-year, the Committee came to the conclusion that the local tax might be altogether abolished, and a substitute provided from the resources thus capable of being made available. For this purpose an amendment of the Church Temporalities Act would be requisite. "The Committee were aware that the adoption of this measure would involve the interposition of a new trust, and the postponement or relinquishment of some of the ulterior objects contemplated by the Church Temporalities Act; but any objection founded on the displacement of the original objects of that Act would be more than countervailed by the great advantages which, in a social, moral, and religious view, would arise from the removal of an obstacle to those feelings of amity and goodwill which it would be essentially conducive to the interests of the country to encourage between the working Protestant clergy and the great body of the community, amongst whom in the cities and towns of

Ireland their duties were usefully and honourably performed."

A majority of the Committee approving of this Report, it was presented to the House on the 28th of July, 1848. No legislative measure founded upon its recommendations has since been adopted; the Act passed in 1854 being intended rather to rectify certain oppressive inequalities in the local charge, and to transfer the primary liability from occupiers to landlords, than to make any essential change in this branch of ecclesiastical revenue.

Early in August he was one of a party invited to meet Sir Robert Peel at Nuneham, the seat of Mr. Vernon Harcourt, in Oxfordshire. He was much pleased with the tone and manner of the ex-Premier, which was, he said, much less reserved and more outspoken than he had anticipated—no assumption and no compliments, but on the whole conciliatory, and his talk about politics very suggestive. There was a good deal of conversation about Ireland, of which his mind seemed full. The expediency of putting the relations between the State and the Catholic Church on a different footing had obviously engrossed much of his thoughts; and in reply to an observation respecting direct endowment, Sir Robert assented, adding

pointedly, "it would be impossible *for me* to do it." In a letter, written on his return to town, allusion is made to this visit. "I went on Saturday last to Mr. Harcourt's, in Oxfordshire, where I met Sir Robert Peel. He was exceedingly gay and agreeable, and *appears* to have no desire to return to office. We had a large party of Tories. I make no doubt that Ministers will propose to endow the Catholic Church next session."*

To the question of equality between different churches his mind perpetually reverted. "Either all or none," he used to say, "ought to be endowed; if Protestantism in England will not consent to all, Catholicism in Ireland has a right to insist upon none." No one recognised to a greater extent the abnegation of individual opinions which the discipline of party renders indispensable; but upon the Church question he was strongly averse to yielding, and beyond the point of abstaining from active participation with those who wished to revive the discussion, he refused to go.

A day or two before Mr. Osborne's motion for inquiry into ecclesiastical property in Ireland, several Catholic members of Parliament happened to dine.

* Extract from a letter to James Galway, Esq., 8th August, 1848.

with him. The conversation turned upon the approaching debate, and various surmises were hazarded as to the probable numbers upon a division. "We shall be expected, I suppose," said one gentleman, "to be dumb if the Secretary of the Treasury does not ask for our votes." "Votes," exclaimed Sheil, "that would be eating our words—swallowing a sword—an act of deglutition which I for one have no notion of attempting." The motion came on, and led to considerable discussion. He did not speak; but when the division was called for, he rose from the Treasury bench and walked out of the House, amid the cheers of his friends below the gangway. It may be asked why he did not vote in the minority? The answer is plain: no Administration can subsist if each of its members is to exercise the right of voting upon all subjects according to his inclinations. Theoretically, nobody doubts that such independence of action is desirable; but no one who understands the meaning of Parliamentary Government can for a moment imagine it to be practicable. Where concession for the sake of union is to end, and where the duty of severing party ties for the sake of maintaining personal consistency begins, is a matter not very capable perhaps of strict definition. But, in

the instance before us, persons of candour will probably admit that while on the one hand it would have been impossible for one holding the office of Master of the Mint to take part against his colleagues in debate or division, where the subject had not been, on the formation of the Government, left an open question, on the other hand he was right in deeming it only due to his own dignity and honour to let it be clearly understood that under no circumstances would his name be inscribed amongst those who were content to leave things in this respect unchanged. No requirement that the Irish Church question should be so dealt with had proceeded, either in 1846 or at the general election of 1847, from his constituents, or from any influential portion of the community. He felt therefore that he was not called upon to break with those whose general policy he approved; and he believed that by those who were ever ready to find fault with what he did, such a course would simply expose him to the charge of having used the occasion as a pretence to cover some purpose of personal pique or ambition.

An incident of private friendship belongs to this period, of which it were inexcusable that the mention should be omitted in this place. A friend called on

him one day to tell him that he had been offered a high appointment abroad, but he hesitated to accept it on account of the expense of outfit. Inquiring how much would be required to defray the extra cost, and finding that his friend was five hundred pounds short of the sum necessary, he at once said, "I think I have about that amount at my bankers, and you are heartily welcome to the use of it." The offer was accepted, and when the draft had been honoured, but fourteen pounds remained to the credit of his account."

In a letter from one of his earliest and latest friends, allusion is made to a conversation that occurred during his sojourn at Brighton in the autumn of this year; and as it affords in many respects a confirmation of the views of his character which have been expressed in the foregoing pages, no apology perhaps will be deemed requisite for its insertion here.*

"I knew Sheil for five-and-thirty years. In the early part of our professional life, from circumstances of a private nature, our acquaintance ripened into an intimacy which, I am happy to say, continued without interruption to the last. If Sheil permitted you to know him at all, you had the fullest opportunity of

* From Charles Phillips, Esq., to the author, April, 1854.

knowing him thoroughly. There was no disguise whatever about him—an excessive candour, sometimes carried, so far as personal considerations went, to the verge of indiscretion, was one of his characteristics. But this was studiously, and somewhat singularly, confined to self. In his utmost frankness he never compromised any one else; and those who smiled at the simplicity of his own revelations, had no fear whatever on the score of any confidence they might have reposed in him. There was not a spice of ill-nature or hypocrisy about him in his private intercourse. This it was which gave a value to what he said —the value of sincerity. Whatever his opinions were worth—and they were weighty and worthy of all acceptance—they were *his* opinions, genuine and without reservation. It is this consciousness which induces me to record the substance of those he expressed to me, on various occasions, on a subject not merely of individual but of universal interest—the authenticity of the Scriptures. In a day of unsettled faith and shallow scepticism, the suffrage of such a man in a matter of such awful import is too valuable to the public weal to be concealed without culpability. Sheil was a Roman Catholic, and educated strictly in the tenets of that faith. There was nothing, however,

of sectarianism about him. Neither a controversialist nor a latitudinarian, he seemed to me to base his belief on the plain and intelligible truths of the Gospel, not sceptical of mysteries which he could not understand, nor credulous of traditions distant and indistinct, but relying on reason, so far as its light sufficed, and confident in faith where he found reason insufficient. It was, as well as I remember, in the autumn of 1849, that I had a very remarkable conversation with him at Brighton on this subject. After alluding to the doctrinal differences which dissociated certain denominations of Christians, he expressed his regret at such causes of disunion. There was, he thought, in the great leading and indisputable truths of Christianity quite enough to bind mankind in a common belief, without bewildering themselves with mysteries, to our limited intelligence, at present rendered, perhaps purposely, inscrutable. 'After all,' said he, 'the great problem is—Is revelation a truth or an imposture? It is an awful question, which all who are able should endeavour to solve for themselves according to the lights given them. Such, at least, is my opinion, and with such a conviction I have taken nothing upon trust. Long ago I determined to examine for myself. I have heard both

sides. There is not an infidel publication of any note extant which I have not studied carefully and anxiously—it seemed to me to be my duty to do so—and the result has been my solemn conviction of the divine origin and entire truth of the Gospel revelation.' Such was Sheil's declaration made to me, and delivered with an earnestness which left on my mind no doubt whatever of its sincerity."

During the session of 1847 as in that of 1848, he seldom spoke, not being asked to do so, and being disposed to construe strictly the official rule, which when the ministerial leader is present, prescribes silence to his subordinates, unless when specifically desired to take a part in the debate. The omission wounded his sensibility no little. He attributed it not to any want of respect on the part of Lord John Russell, but to the influence of one of his colleagues, who he believed had a wish to disparage his judgment and discretion in dealing with the class of subjects that chiefly engaged the attention of the House of Commons at the period in question. He took vengeance for this real or imaginary slight in all sorts of jokes at the expense of the individual alluded to. Perceiving him one day to suffer much apparently from mental anxiety and agitation, he said to

the person sitting next him, "Is —— subject to the gout?" And on being told that he was not supposed to be so, he whispered, "Well, if he hasn't it in the body, he has it in the mind; for no other devil could possibly produce such twitchings and contortions." The Premier's attention having been drawn to the circumstance which had caused his chagrin, care was afterwards taken to give him timely intimation when he was likely to be called on to speak.

At the opening of the session of 1850, his estimate of the condition of parties is thus briefly indicated. "Everything looks auspiciously for the Government. The Protectionists will make no genuine impression in Parliament. Those who are most anxious for high rents are afraid of public commotion, which might put all property to hazard."*

When it was determined that a new coin, value the tenth of a pound sterling, should be issued, directions were given by the Treasury that the value of the piece should be inscribed upon the reverse as well as its name. It was suggested by the Master of the Mint that in an artistic point of view the obverse should be made as simple as possible, and Mr. Wyon, the chief engraver to the Mint, made a design accord-

* Letter to James Galway, Esq., 28th January, 1850.

ingly, in which no other words than "Victoria Regina" appeared. No sooner, however, had this departure from established usage become known, than loud attacks were directed against the Government generally, and especially against the official author of the innovation. The omission of the title of "Defensatrix Fidei, Dei Gratia," usually appended to the effigy of the sovereign, was found fault with, and a motive for the momentous change was sought for in the creed of its official author. It will hardly be credited in time to come that week after week public journals were occupied with invectives and insinuations on this subject; and soon after Parliament re-assembled, a question was put in the House of Commons by Major Beresford, as to whether the offending florin was to be suffered to go into circulation. Mr. Sheil stated in reply that although the design had been formally approved by the Privy Council, he wished it to be understood that if any error had been committed, it was upon him personally that the blame ought to be thrown. He avowed that he had seen no objection to adopting the precedent which he found in a portion of the silver coinage struck in Her Majesty's name at Calcutta, and on which, for some reason unassigned, the ecclesiastical title of Her Majesty was omitted. But he briefly and emphatically repudiated the absurd

imputations of sectarian motives. The epithet Defender of the Faith had been originally conferred by the Pope on Henry VIII. for having written a book in support of the doctrine of Transubstantiation. It had in progress of time come simply to signify head of the Anglican Church,—a dignity and prerogative "which he trusted the sovereign of this country would never cease to enjoy; and with regard to the words *Dei gratia,* no man was more prompt to acknowledge that a Queen adorned by so many virtues was a special gift of Providence to her faithful and devoted people."*

On the second reading of the bill which proposed to legalize the marriage of a deceased wife's sister, he spoke somewhat in the style that marked his earlier efforts.

"I shall apply myself exclusively to the moral and domestic results of the proposed measure, and inquire what will be its effects upon the wife, the husband, and the prospective bride, whose pathway to the altar is across her sister's grave? An amiable woman now receives her unmarried sister with open arms; she cherishes her with a truthful and a trustful love; she watches over her well-being with the solicitude of an almost maternal care; no injurious suspicion can come near her; and, although her sister should pass hours and days in her husband's company, upon her deep and still affection, no dark conjecture is allowed to cast a shade. But if this bill should pass, if the wife be taught

* 25th February, 1850. Hansard, vol. cviii., p. 1334.

to regard the daughter of her father and of her mother as the heiress of her bed, and as having peradventure an illegitimate pre-occupation of her husband's heart, her feelings would undergo an inevitable alteration; the worst of all the domestic fiends would enter into her soul, and possess itself of all her being; trifles 'light as air' would be invested with a powerful confirmation; the most harmless familiarities would be misconstrued; she would detect a glance in every look, and a pressure in every touch; her fancy would be stained with images of sin, and in those hours of ailment, to which almost every woman is condemned, she would be pursued and haunted by many a dark and distracting surmise. I turn to the husband. He now looks upon his wife's sister as his own; he feels for her no other than the fraternal sentiment; his intercourse with her is unsullied by a wish; but if he shall be taught to regard as an object of future possession the woman to whom he will be placed in perilous proximity, phantasms, which ought to be chased away, will crowd upon him, and a change of moral temperature will never fail to follow. And upon the wife's sister what sort of influence will be produced by this measure? She now regards her sister's husband as her protector and her friend; into her unimpassioned gratitude no other undue admixture of tenderness is infused; but if she shall have a contingent, or rather a vested remainder in the pillow on which her sister's cheek may soon be coldly and lifelessly laid—if she shall be taught to associate her wedding garment with her sister's shroud—I am afraid that the spirit of conjugal enterprise will be awakened; she will have recourse to all the expedients of captivation—all that she says and looks, or does—all her gestures, her attitudes, and her intonations, will be swayed in her intercourse with her sister's husband, by that spirit of speculative endearment which women can so readily and almost instinctively assume. These considerations induce me to think that this measure is unadvisable."*

* Debate on second reading of the Bill to Legalize Marriage with Deceased Wife's Sister, 6th of March, 1850.

He expressed his belief that the predominant feeling of the women of England, Scotland, and Ireland was opposed to the measure; and concluded by declaring his apprehension that by its adoption Parliament would run counter to the religious feelings of the nation at large.

A bill for the amendment of the Irish electoral system was brought forward early in the session of 1850. The clause by which it was proposed to enfranchise all occupiers in counties rated at 8*l*. and upwards, irrespective of tenure, excited much opposition. It was resisted by the Tory party as tending to destroy all the influence of property at elections. Mr. Sheil reminded them that there were certain "conservative concomitants" of the proposed franchise, which, if they insisted upon raising the rateable test to a higher point of value, would go far to countervail its popular tendency. He thought the expense of county contests would rather be increased than diminished by the multiplication of polling places. In the next place a great proportion of tenant voters would be unprotected from the intimidation of their landlords by the possession of leases, which would in future be unnecessary for the acquisition of the electoral right. Finally, "The voter who hitherto went

to a county town, and who in the progress of perhaps twenty or thirty miles was infected by the popular epidemic, would no longer be influenced by excited and exciting thousands, but would vote under the eye of his landlord, the expression of whose exceedingly intelligent physiognomy he would not be at a loss to understand."*

Exaggerated estimates of the extent of the county constituencies had been relied on by several members. One honourable member had supposed that the electors of his county would amount to from 20,000 to 30,000. "Then," said Mr. Sheil, "the only effect would be, that in future the noble lord would have to fish with nets instead of with lines for votes."†

The Conservatives, both Protectionist and Peelite, proposed that the new county franchise should be based upon a rating of 15*l.* instead of 8*l.* This was resisted upon the ground that, unless very considerable numbers were embraced in each constituency, the enfranchisement of agricultural tenancy at will would merely amount to a repetition, in an aggravated form, of the political serfhood created by the Chandos clause of the English Reform Bill of 1832.

* 1st March, 1850. Hansard, vol. ix., p. 277.
† 4th March, 1850. Hansard, vol. ix., p. 326.

"It is enough," said Mr. Sheil, "to state that a tenant-at-will rated at 8*l.* will be polled in the presence of his landlord. This great change would give an undue preponderance to the landed interest, if the independent householder did not produce a counterpoise to the subservient cultivator of the soil. How monstrous would be the anomaly if their aspirations should unhappily be realized, by whom it is most intently but most injudiciously desired that a minimum qualification should be adopted, at once sufficiently high yet low enough for their purposes; sufficiently high to exclude the great majority of householders of the county towns from the county constituency of Ireland, yet low enough to let in a large mass of acquiescent vassalage by an expansion of the Chandos clause! The occupier of land rated at the pseudo-Conservative minimum, whose political independence is signified by his designation, whose suffrage and whose land are held by the same tenure, whose holding is unprotected by a lease, and whose vote is unprotected by the ballot, is to be invested with the franchise, for the exercise of which the absence of all volition and almost of all thought constitutes, in the opinion of some of those who hear me, his most appropriate qualification; while, upon the other hand, a householder resident in such a town as Thurles or Carrick-on-Suir, containing 12,000 people, by neither of which a representative is sent to Parliament—a respectable householder rated at 8*l.* for a tenement, which in an English town, with the same population, would be rated at upwards of 18*l.*—a trader in good circumstances, well to do in the world, and with a capital in his integrity, industrious, sagacious, and intelligent, is to be deprived, or, I should rather say, stripped and spoliated of that constitutional right of which, in reference to the interests of his country, he would make an honest, a conscientious, an honourable, and undaunted use. This would be most impolitic and unjust—it would be most impolitic, because it would be most unjust.

Mistaken fear has been the bane of Ireland. There is nothing against which Englishmen ought to be more on their

guard. It was mistaken fear that dictated the Penal Code. It was mistaken fear by which its repeal was delayed. It was mistaken fear by which that very procrastination of justice was occasioned which led to the moral insurrection at the hustings against the proprietors of the soil. There is nothing of which Englishmen ought to be so much afraid as of mistaken fear.

"But may not another O'Connell arise? Yes, nature may contribute the same faculties, but you will not furnish the same opportunities. Nature is unexhausted and inexhaustible, and in her boundless abundance she may contribute the same wonderful versatility, the same astonishing variety of resources, the same untiring perseverance, the same indomitable energy, the same eloquence, by which the greatest of all political miracles—the conversion of a populace into a people—was effected; but though nature may do all this, you will not furnish a second O'Connell with a second penal code; you will not supply him with the iron out of which the weapons were forged with which ascendency was struck down. If the Catholic question had been adjusted at the Union, if the vast designs of Mr. Pitt had not been baffled, and Ireland not been put through that agony of excitement through which you saw her pass, you never would have witnessed that social disruption to which you look back with alarm."*

During the same session a bill was introduced by Ministers for the abolition of the Vice-regal government of Ireland. Large majorities in both Houses approved of the principle of the measure. They regarded it as the tardy termination of an obsolete system of provincial rule, and the prudent retrenchment of a considerable annual expenditure. Ridicule had

* Debate on third reading of Irish Parliamentary Voters Bill, 10th May, 1850.

long attached to the ceremonies of the mimic court at Dublin; and the belief prevailed that to sweep away the faded pageant, would be the most effectual means of coming at the root of much evil in the shape of provincial jobbing and intrigue. Had the bill been limited to the abolition of the Viceroyalty, and the reconstruction of the Irish department of the general administration, in a manner fitted to combine the advantages of local knowledge of the wants to be provided for, with ministerial representation thereof in the Cabinet and the Legislature, the measure would undoubtedly have been carried. Suggestions to this effect were urged both publicly and privately upon the Government, by persons well acquainted with the condition of society in Ireland, and little influenced by the mere cry of opposition raised by a portion of the inhabitants of Dublin. But when it appeared that the intention was to remove everything like local administration, and to centralize the whole departmental authority in London; those who would otherwise have supported the measure became its most strenuous opponents. In the Peers, Lords Fitzwilliam and Londonderry were sustained by the opinion strongly expressed by the Duke of Wellington against so entire and impolitic a change; and in the

Commons long debates took place, though the minority who voted against the second reading did not exceed thirty-three.

Towards the close of the discussion, Mr. Sheil, whose sentiments on this subject have been already noticed, rose to defend the general principle of the bill, desirous as he was that modifications should be introduced in Committee, calculated to obviate the objections above named.

"That a considerable influence was exercised by the Irish Executive through the instrumentality of the once all-powerful proprietors of the soil cannot be doubted; but suddenly the foundation on which this artificial fabric was constructed gave way; Catholic Emancipation was carried; it was followed by Parliamentary Reform; power was almost immediately transferred from the favoured and manageable few to the multifarious and unmanageable many. The Lord-Lieutenant was denuded of all influence; he was unable materially to effect the return of a single member of Parliament; and what had been an engine of State was converted into a mere scenic machine for the very imperfect representation of Royalty on a very provincial stage. The spectators are weary of the exhibition, and it is time that the theatre should be closed. Let us get rid of the Irish Court, which is, after all, a badge of colonial inferiority. Let us get rid of the Malvolio dignity of the retainers of this mimetic institution. Let this glittering superfluity—I dare not call it this gaudy nuisance—be put aside, and in lieu of all this mockery, let us give the opportunity to the Irish people to give to the Sovereign of that great empire of which Ireland constitutes a part so important, that frequent welcome which will never fail to come in fervour from the nation's

heart, and of which, by its reiteration, the enthusiasm will never be impaired."*

On Mr. G. A. Hamilton's motion that a separate provision should be made out of the public revenues for the education of children in accordance with the principles of the Established Church, Mr. Sheil entered briefly but lucidly into the discussion of the important question raised. He cordially admitted that,—

"No system of education would deserve the name of national to which the Protestants of Ireland could justly object. I have accordingly considered whether there existed any well-founded Protestant objection to the National Board. I say well-founded objection, because when religious qualms take an acquisitive turn,—(and it is from the Chancellor of the Exchequer that the honourable and learned members for the University of Dublin require spiritual consolation,)—it is only reasonable to ask, whether their fears for the integrity of the Protestant faith have any substantial ground? After a good deal of consideration, and after having given due weight to all that has been urged against the National Board, I have I own come to the conclusion that the apprehensions are wholly visionary by which the Parliamentary conscience of the members for the University of Dublin are periodically perturbed. The analogy of certain grants made in England for separate Catholic schools, is like an inference from the donations to Lazarus that Dives might, with propriety, likewise ask for alms. The revenues of the Established Church ought to be regarded as the natural source whence funds in a

* Debate on second reading of Lord Lieutenancy Abolition Bill, 17th June, 1850.

country like Ireland should be drawn, if needed, for Church education. The University of Durham was founded not very long ago out of the surplus endowments of that diocese. The example was worthy of imitation."*

He concluded by a picture of the visit of the Queen and Prince Albert, when in Dublin in 1849, to the National Schools, where Her Majesty had been attended by the Protestant and Catholic Archbishops of Dublin and the representatives of the Presbyterian body.

His nationality was not indeed sectarian. Early associations and life-long friendships with many of his Protestant fellow-countrymen, had combined with the keen appreciation of the fame achieved in literature and arms by the minority of Irishmen, to render him on all occasions ready to assert the claim of race to the national sympathy he so freely proffered. It was no rhetorical affectation when he exclaimed,—

"I entertain for my Protestant fellow-citizens a more than compatriot sentiment. Do not listen to me with incredulity. When I reflect upon the great things which have been achieved by the Protestants of Ireland, when I consider how much genius, how much wisdom, how much eloquence, how much virtue, and how much valour—how many great statesmen, great writers, great thinkers, great speakers, and most surpassing soldiers, have issued from a minority so comparatively small,—I cannot withhold my admiration; and let me add that gratitude is associated

* Debate on National Education, 21st June, 1850.

with admiration, when I recollect that there was not a single illustrious Irish Protestant born within the last century who did not take part with his Catholic fellow-countrymen, and plead the cause of Catholic enfranchisement."*

An attack had for some time been anticipated on the foreign policy of Lord Palmerston, and rumour ascribed to the instigation of Russian and Austrian diplomatists of both sexes the zeal manifested by certain of his prominent assailants. During the debate upon Lord Stanley's motion, Sheil was standing with other members of the Commons, at the bar of the Lords. He listened attentively, and commented to those beside him on each successive allegation of inciting revolutionary movements in Italy, and encouraging the Free Corps against the Sonderbund. Many of these half-audible commentaries afforded much amusement to those around him. When allusion was made to one particular despatch, supposed to have given umbrage to the Court of St. Petersburg, he muttered, as if to himself, "Umph! there's *leaven*† in that!" A majority of thirty-seven in the House of Peers affirmed the censure proposed. Had the Com-

* Debate on Mr. Hamilton's motion in Committee of Supply, for a separate grant to the Church Education Society, 21st June, 1850.

† Lieven.

mons tacitly acquiesced in the opinion thus pronounced, Lord Palmerston must have retired. On the motion of Mr. Roebuck, however, a vote of confidence and approval was carried, after four nights' debate, by a majority of forty-six. Mr. Sheil did not speak on this occasion. A few days afterwards he wrote to Mr. Galway, "At length all our dangers are past, and clouds full of thunder are dispersed. There was a moment when our antagonists considered our doom to be sealed. The majority of Friday has disposed of the session. The death of Sir Robert Peel! I little anticipated it when I dined with him about a month ago, with the most distinguished literary men in England. His party will not, in my opinion, form a confederacy with Disraeli. I think that Sir J. Graham, notwithstanding his assault on Palmerston, will still be ours."* The allusion here is to one of the last dinners given by Sir Robert Peel, at which M. Scribe and other foreign celebrities were present.

The Upper House having, on the motion of Lord St. Germans, raised the county qualification of voters from 8*l.* to 12*l.*, several of the Irish Liberal members were reluctant to acquiesce in so great a change; and

* Letter to James Galway, Esq., 6th July, 1850.

when the bill came back to the Commons, a good deal of discussion arose upon the motion that the Lords' amendments be agreed to. Mr. Sheil spoke briefly but forcibly, recommending the adoption of the measure even as it stood, rather than allow the Irish counties to remain any longer in the scandalous condition of being virtually without constituencies. The bill, if it passed, would be no waiver of the right to a larger measure of enfranchisement whenever it could be obtained. It was the mere acceptance of an instalment, but a very valuable one, upon account. This was the last occasion upon which he spoke in the House of Commons.

He was not a little gratified at the desire expressed by Mr. Labouchere that he would sit for his bust to Mr. C. Moore. The portrait in marble, from which the drawing prefixed to these Memoirs has been taken, derives additional value from the circumstance that it is the only likeness which exists of him in his maturer years.

CHAPTER XXII.

1850—1851.

Appointed Minister at Florence—Motives for leaving Parliament —Anticipations of ease and health—First impressions of Italy—The *corps diplomatique*—Views regarding Italian politics—Case of Count Guicciardini—Society at Florence—Sudden illness and death—Removal of his remains to Ireland.

With the session of 1850 Mr. Sheil's Parliamentary career reached its close. For twenty years he had occupied a prominent place in the varied controversies of the Senate. He had seen most of the great principles for which he had contended finally adopted, and engrafted into the policy of the State; and the suffrages of the many and the few had concurred in ascribing to his advocacy no humble share in the accomplishment of these results. As an orator his success had equalled, if not exceeded, his most sanguine

expectations; and even the judgment of friendship will hardly be deemed erroneous in awarding him as many and as varied triumphs in debate, as any of his most gifted contemporaries. Sir Robert Peel is said to have declared, after listening to Lord Brougham's speech in 1836, in favour of the immediate abolition of negro apprenticeship, that "he never knew before of what the English language was capable." A critic no less eminent, Lord Plunket, when speaking of the comparative merits of celebrated speakers, said that "he had thought Curran had a greater choice of words than any man he had ever listened to until he had heard Sheil."* No brilliancy or variety of diction, however, would probably have won such a tribute of praise from so severe a judge, had it been unsupported by a vigorous power of reasoning—the quality which, in its most transcendent degree, he himself possessed. Many were apt to think that the musical cadences and many-coloured forms of imagery, which at the instant gave so much delight, were incompatible with sober purpose and close argumentation. But those who analyze his best speeches will hardly fail to discern in them the marks of careful thought, and the presence of a well-considered aim. Beneath the

* Letter from Lord Oranmore, 8th December, 1853.

profuse decorations, glittering side-lights, and rapidly shifting scenes presented to the dazzled throng, there was always a firm and substantial scaffolding, fabricated for no temporary purpose, and fashioned with no ordinary skill.

The exuberance of his fancy sometimes tended, no doubt, to distract attention, where a less prodigal use of images and witticisms would have served rather to its concentration and direction. He was apt to be fascinated by a phrase, and he thought he might occasionally take so much of liberty with his reputation as to indulge in the utterance of a thought intrinsically just and fine, although not strictly capable of concatenation with the arguments preceding and following it. His appreciation of rhetoric rhythm was minute and intense almost to a fault. The happy expressions of others once heard by him were never forgotten; and when he had collected and arranged the materials of a speech, he would often spend hours ruminating over the forms of expressions, and changing and altering the position of the words in particular sentences before he had settled them to his liking. The day after he had delivered one of his most successful speeches in the House of Commons, he happened to

call on Mr. Macready, with whom he found their mutual friend, Mr. Wallis. Something was said about the triumph of the night before, and one passage in particular was referred to as fully accounting for the effect which seemed to have been produced on the occasion. "Ha, well—what do you conceive was the cause of its being so effective?" One of his friends accounted for it by the novelty of the ideas and illustrations presented; the other said, on the contrary, he was convinced that the magic lay in the moral power exerted over men's minds by the justice and nobleness of the appeal to which it formed a climax. "Not a bit of it," said Sheil; "it was the prosody did it all; chop up the paragraph into other lengths, and give it with different cadences, and nobody would have thought anything of it."

To say that his ambition as a statesman was as fully satisfied as his desire of oratoric fame, would be untrue. Lucrative office and titular distinction he did not care for. In the island grave, forgotten by all save him, were buried whatever hopes and vanities he had ever cherished, to which these could minister. Childless, and past the point "whence from the down-hill steep life seemed for him to be all limited," there were few honours or distinctions which for him

possessed any peculiar charm or enticement. But there was one—one which he had long looked forward to as his right, and the denial of which he regarded as a wrong. For a seat in the Cabinet he had refused to ask in 1846, and the circumstance of its not having been then offered him he doubtless ascribed less to any want of just appreciation on the part of Lord J. Russell, than to the weakness of his party, and the conflict of pretensions with which he was beset. Certain it is that he did not in any sense resent his exclusion at the time. He looked forward to the consolidation of the Liberal party in power, and naturally supposed that, though long deferred, his turn of recognition would come. But when four years had passed, and it came not, although during that interval others were admitted within the pale of administrative power, he felt that he was never likely to obtain the reward he had so richly earned, and it must not be concealed that with this conviction were associated feelings of bitterness and mortification. He well knew that had he belonged to the privileged class, or had he in early life been mean enough to have renounced what he himself once termed "the unprofitable errors of the Church of Rome,"* obstacles less insuperable would have

* Speech in Catholic Association, 16th January, 1826.

been in his way; and that had he inherited a coronet or a fortune, either would have been generally recognised as a higher claim than genius, however indisputed, and fidelity to party, however consistent and sincere. His insight into character enabled him to discriminate between the dispositions of those with whom he had to deal, and he probably did justice to those who felt his exclusion to be undoubtedly a sacrifice to the prejudices of caste and of creed, although he certainly never knew precisely how the case stood, in which he was so deeply interested. But his sense of disappointment rarely betrayed itself even to those with whom he was most intimate, and his anxiety on account of his wife's health, during the spring of 1850, led him to wish for diplomatic employment abroad, for which he was ready to exchange the sinecure post in the Ministry, of which he had grown tired.

Towards the end of October, he received an intimation that the object of his wishes was about to be attained, and that he would shortly be named to a diplomatic appointment in Italy. The office of Minister at the Court of Tuscany had become vacant by the death of Sir George Hamilton; and although it was not certain that he would be named as his successor, he learned that he was to form a part of the

new arrangements whatever they might be, that this vacancy had rendered necessary. Soon afterwards it was decided that he should be sent to Florence; and on the 4th November his nomination to that post was formally communicated to him.

Relieved from a suspense which had grown irksome and injurious, his first emotions were those of unmixed satisfaction. He had for some time been troubled with misgivings, as to the possibility of surviving his reputation as a speaker in Parliament. He probably felt no diminution of the intellectual power that had for nearly twenty years enabled him to exert at will a kind of spell over the most capricious and fastidious audience in the world, and many of his latest efforts attest the unchilled vivacity of his fancy and the unattenuated vigour of his powers of expression. But the shadows of an early old age were nevertheless stealing upon him; and he was not unconscious or regardless of the diminution in his physical energies, which had always been drawn heavily upon, by his highly dramatic mode of speaking. The glitter of the blade was still unsullied by any indications of rust; but the handle somehow seemed to have grown loose when grasped, and its use was gradually felt to be more laborious and exhausting.

The incessant recurrence of his old enemy the gout, and the habitual resort to the use of colchicum as an antidote to pain, had undermined slowly, but irreparably, his originally healthy constitution. When remonstrated with upon the subject of his use of this treacherous emollient, he was accustomed to laugh and say that longevity was too intricate a game for a hard toiling man to play; and that immunity from bodily suffering during the period when one's mind is supposed to be at its maturity, was too great a blessing to be wagered against a few additional years of dotage. This philosophy no doubt had its origin in the restlessness of his disposition, and the habits of excitement to which he had become accustomed. It were a total mistake to suppose that this excitability was limited to the occasions on which he was personally expected to take an ostensible part. Far otherwise. One who had constant opportunities of observing him during the latter years of his life, noticed how sensitively he seemed to feel passing events, most of which those with whom he politically associated appeared to regard with little or no concern; and in the House of Commons he not unfrequently evinced as much emotion at the success or failure of a member of his party, as he would have manifested had it been

his own. To ascribe this to romantic friendship or sympathy would be absurd: he would have been the loudest in repudiating such an affectation. It arose from the sensibility of his nature, not from any assumption of the airs of sentimentality, which he thoroughly despised; and more than one instance might be mentioned when his betrayal of such emotions as are here alluded to, was calculated only to provoke the rebuke of his friends as mere imprudence.

During the autumn, public attention began to be directed to the measure taken by the Holy See, for the establishment in England of a Catholic hierarchy. The details of the discussion which arose are too fresh in general remembrance to require any particular notice in this place. Every man of good sense and good feeling, whatever part he may have felt himself called upon to take, deplored at the time the resuscitation of animosities between creeds and classes, that in past times had proved so hurtful to the national peace and welfare. No one saw more clearly than Mr. Sheil the consequences that were likely to result from the revival of politico-religious feuds; and no one would have striven more earnestly to moderate the asperity of contending parties, had it been possible to do so. He had had too much experience of the baleful effects of such contentions to look with

indifference on their resuscitation; and when talked at or talked to by persons who wished to draw from him some expression of opinion on the subject in dispute, which their zeal or incaution would have been sure to use as an additional fagot in the fire, he generally sought to damp their ardour by some harmless pleasantry or repartee.

While the excitement was at its height, a change which had taken place some time before in the Catholic ritual, as observed in England, became the subject of public animadversion. The prayer for the sovereign, which had formerly been used about the middle of the canon of the mass was discontinued; while that of *Domine salvum fac* was retained at the end of the service. Much controversy here arose, it being contended by some that the alteration implied a diminution of respect for the Queen, whilst by others it was defended as a wholly unpolitical restoration of the Roman liturgy, as used in other countries. A Protestant clergyman, who seemed to take considerable interest in the discussion, chanced to meet Mr. Sheil at the Athenæum Club, and appealed to him as to whether the imputation was *not* founded in fact. "You see," he said, taking a Book of Common Prayer out of his pocket, "we

pray for her Majesty in the Morning Service, in the Litany and at the Communion Service; that is, three times; while you only pray for her once." "Pooh!" said Shiel, "there's nothing in that; don't you know very well that one prayer of ours is worth three of yours?"

To those with whom he was intimate, he gave vent to feelings of a very different kind. He well understood the effect which would be produced in Ireland by any attempt at legislative interference with the authority hitherto recognised in the Catholic episcopate there. Painful solicitude regarding the disruption of party ties filled his thoughts; and he more impatiently than ever sighed for extrication from the difficulties in which he felt he should be personally placed, if called upon in the ensuing session to express in Parliament the views he entertained upon the whole question. In earlier years he would not perhaps have shunned the painful responsibility, and would have rather sought than avoided a discussion for every point in which he was peculiarly fitted and prepared. But having made up his mind to retire from Parliamentary life, and being persuaded that no effort or sacrifice of his would avail anything at such a juncture, he naturally preferred avoiding all public participation in the controversy, and withdrawing

to a more tranquil field of honourable usefulness, for the remainder of his days. For this he has been often censured; and those who never gave him credit for sincerity in his most active and successful exertions, and who were continually denying his value as a partisan, true to the instincts of envy and malignity, turned round upon him at the last, and loudly reproached him with desertion. Such imputations affected him but little. He had indeed his own regrets and sorrows, but they were not mingled with surprise or concern at the increasing or unjust aspersions alluded to. "The heart knoweth its own bitterness, and a stranger comprehendeth it not." But the man of truest courage troubles himself little, if at all, with the miserable taunt of being afraid.

"Shortly before he left for Florence," writes the friend whose earlier recollections of him have been already noticed,* "we met in Pall Mall, and walked together nearly to his residence. I was then painfully struck (I had not seen him for ten or twelve months) with his altered appearance. He was feeble in gait, and had become rather unwieldy in bulk. From the melancholy and somewhat morose expression of his countenance, I concluded he was suffering from internal organic disease, or from suppressed gout.

* See vol. i., p. 232.

Almost the next thing I heard relative to him was his death."

Late in November he paid a brief visit to Ireland. The felicitations of his old friends there were not unmingled with regrets that his Parliamentary career should have terminated; and he was not insensible to the emotion with which some of them bade him adieu. But for the most part he appeared to be cheerful, and was ready to enter warmly into the thoughts and concerns of those who in times past had evinced towards him sympathy and regard. He was subjected as previously to many importunities which he could not meet—some to obtain personal favours for individuals who had no claim upon his interposition, and not a few for charities of various kinds. One morning, a priest, with whom he was unacquainted, was introduced, with the view of soliciting his aid towards a fund which it was proposed to raise to supply the wants of the Catholic instructors of the poor in the remote districts of Connaught. He apologised for declining to contribute, saying, that he had already devoted as much to such purposes as he could reasonably afford. The reverend applicant still pressed his suit, and urged that if the peasantry were, in consequence of famine and pestilence, left without their usual teachers, the efforts of Protestants to convert

them would be greatly facilitated; too many instances of such conversions, he said, had already occurred; but he was happy to say that before their deaths all such proselytes returned to the bosom of the Church. "Then, my good sir," said Sheil, "I could not think of intermeddling with a state of things so propitious, for I cannot imagine any lot more enviable in a country like Ireland, than that a man should live a Protestant and die a Catholic."

In December he returned to London, whence, his arrangements being completed, he took his departure for Italy in the course of the same month. He made but a short stay in Paris, and arrived in Florence about the middle of January. At first he seems to have gone out but little, and to have occupied himself chiefly in becoming acquainted with technical details connected with his office. His knowledge of French, which he had always kept up, though less perfect than has sometimes been stated, gave him many facilities in the way of acquiring information; and of these, as he gradually became accustomed to his novel mode of life, he was not slow in availing himself. He lost no time in recommencing the study of Italian, which he had nearly forgotten. He took lessons from M. de Tivoli, whose recollections of their intercourse, though brief, are sufficiently characteristic.

"He was very exact concerning time, and asked me the first thing to be punctual at the appointed hour; and when the hand of the clock marked the elapsed time he used to put an end to the lesson, even if we were reading an interesting period, and leave the room. He was very kind and affable, but sometimes rather eccentric."*

It is not easy to describe the mingled feelings of wonder and delight with which the triumphs of ancient and mediæval art are calculated to fill a mind so constituted. He had dreamed of them in boyhood, and in the maturer judgment of his prime had fancied he could see them afar off. Italy had always seemed to be the promised land of his imagination. Its vales and palaces had been the scenes of more than one of his dramatic efforts, and its traditions had furnished forth their characters and incidents. The love of architectural grandeur and of sculptured beauty is traceable in most of his ideal compositions; and the exquisite sense of pleasure he derived from standing in the shadow of some lofty pile, or interrogating the expression of some living marble, was a thing to be felt by himself and others, rather than understood. It was forty years since he had in verse paid homage to

* Letter from M. de Tivoli, 8th March, 1854.

"Youth—sublime,
And blooming as the daylight's proud-faced god—
The heathen sculptor drew down from the sun
In his magnificent idolatry."*

Allusion is made to his first impressions on finding himself amid the wonders of Italian art, in a letter to the author of these memoirs, written early in May, and which derives peculiar interest from its being one of the last of any considerable length in which his personal feelings regarding his own position are expressed without reserve.

"You will be curious to know something of myself, or rather, in the first instance, of the far better half of me. Mrs. Sheil has been suffering a good deal, but not, I am convinced, as much as she would have suffered in England. It was for her that I came here and left the House of Commons, with all its exciting vicissitudes. Florence has great advantages, but I should not be reconciled to my exile from Westminster, except by the belief—at all events the hope—that I have done something to requite so amiable a woman for all that she has done for me. I have learned to love art since I came here, though not as yet to discriminate with a perfect judgment between so many objects of varied beauty. You would

* *The Huguenot*, Act iv., scene 2.

be enchanted at Florence, where I am more than pleased. I am in no apprehension of want of mental occupation here when I am released from diplomatic exercitation. I find I have a great deal more to do than I anticipated. The Austrian possession of Tuscany, and the plot which is, beyond all doubt, going on to shut our manufactures out of Italy, keep me in constant watchfulness. I find every day an illustration of the French proverb, '*Il mène comme un ambassadeur.*' I cannot believe a word I hear from my colleagues, and the more vehement the protestations of the Austrian Minister, the more incredulous I am to all the assurances which he thinks me sufficiently simple to accept. I have a good deal to do also with Petre, who represents *me* at Rome. There are perpetual differences arising between our Government and the Papal, resulting from the unfortunate alienation which exists between us. I am vain enough to think that if I were in Rome I could do a great deal in bringing about a reconciliation, and even as it is, I do my utmost to soften the resentful feelings that prevail at the Vatican. I do not, however, see any immediate prospect of going there. I see that More O'Ferral has been returned for Longford. The resignation of the Governor of Malta

is certainly most honourable to him. I am curious to know what course he will take. He certainly will have considerable weight in the House. I rather think that he will support the Ministers. I greatly fear that my friend Bellew will lose Louth. . . . . I hear from high quarters in England that the Whigs expect to get through the session. I am convinced that they will not resign, except a vote of censure or something equivalent to it be carried. In this course they are, I think, quite justified, after having resumed power, by the Queen's express desire, and when Lord Stanley failed in forming a Government. How strange that Ireland should be the cause of a panic, which is so near to destruction. Lord Stanley, if he form a Government, will be struck by the same power which has already given Lord John an almost mortal blow. The Irish members will be forced into hostility to Lord Stanley, if he acts on his ultra-Protestant declarations. The Pope's *Chargé d'Affaires* is appalled at the perspective which he presents. However, the political dread of Palmerston preponderates, after all, over the religious alarm that Stanley has excited."*

Something of the feeling here indicated of unbelief in diplomatic assurances of national goodwill and per-

* Dated from Florence, 4th May, 1851.

sonal high consideration, may possibly have betrayed itself in looks or gestures, though not in words, during his first communications with his colleagues of the ministerial corps; and may serve to account, perhaps, for symptoms that were occasionally observable of a tendency to depreciate his claim to the acquisition of influence at the Grand-ducal Court. But there were other circumstances that necessarily contributed to a like tone regarding him. He was a new man, who had never served an hour's apprenticeship to the craft, and the spirit of that professional freemasonry by which its members are generally animated, instinctively prepared to challenge the fitness and aptitude of the intruder. His improvisation of the part of Plenipotentiary would, it was expected, afford infinite matter for small criticism and cavil. No mere statesman could suddenly master the mysteries of ambassadorial etiquette; and consistently with refined courtesy, and even the parade of encouraging advice and friendly suggestion, ample opportunities were anticipated of making the man of genius feel that he was not one of the true-born and thorough-bred triflers with the affairs of nations. Not inconsiderable was the surprise created, when instead of affecting awkwardly the airs and attitudes to which he was

wholly unaccustomed, the newly-appointed envoy gave it to be understood that he meant to be at Florence pretty much the sort of individual he had been known to be at Brookes's—careless in his dress, outspoken in private society, very unassuming in public, and in every respect the genuine sort of creature that God had intended him to be. It was utterly disgusting to the dowagers of Tuscan society to see how little he valued ceremony and punctilio; and his straightforward mode of speaking and acting indicated, in the opinion of certain politicals, both Italian and foreign, tendencies in the direction of Liberalism deeply to be lamented, if not feared.

His sentiments regarding Italian sufferings and wrongs were not unknown. They had been freely and feelingly expressed on the occasion of his bringing before the House of Commons, in 1845, circumstances connected with the opening of Mazzini's letters. After glancing at the insurrectionary movements of 1831 in the Papal States, whose suppression had caused the banishment of Mazzini, he proceeded to notice the efforts which had been made by the Five Great Powers to induce the Papal Government to adopt various internal reforms. Lord Palmerston had directed Sir Hamilton Seymour to proceed from

Florence to Rome for the purpose of concerting there, with the Ministers of France, Austria, Russia, and Prussia, the advice which should be given on the occasion. A despatch of the 7th of September recounting at some length the administrative amendments which were thus suggested, and their rejection by the Ministers of Gregory XVI., was read *in extenso* by Mr. Sheil. It disclaimed on the part of the British Government any direct interest in the concerns of the Roman States, and all thoughts of interfering in them. It was, in fact, only at the entreaties of France and Austria that Sir H. Seymour had been sent to Rome. Finding that the recommendations made by the representatives of the Five Powers were wholly disregarded, he declared the object of his mission to be at an end.

"The Court of Rome appears to rely upon the temporary presence of foreign troops, and to have 'done nothing to allay the popular discontent.' The despatch concludes, 'The English Government foresees that if there be a perseverance in the present course, new troubles will break out in the Roman States of a still more serious nature, and of which the consequences will at last become dangerous to the peace of Europe. If these anticipations shall be unhappily fulfilled, England will, at all events, be free from all responsibility for the calamities which will be occasioned by the resistance offered to the wise and urgent counsels given by the English Cabinet.' . . Such is the view taken by Sir Hamilton Seymour of the abuses existing

in the Papal States. It may appear singular that I, a Roman Catholic, should think it judicious to advert to the subject. I distinguish between the Italian potentate and the spiritual head of the Catholic Church—I see in the Pope, as Pope, the supreme pontiff of Christendom, the successor of St. Peter in an uninterrupted apostolical lineage;—I see in the Pope the supreme authority in the government of the Church invested with holy prerogatives, which for the execution of his office are indispensably required. Upon questions of pure unmixed spirituality, I bow without hesitation to the decision of the Pope; but when I pass from the pontiff to the prince, I cannot be insensible to those temporal abuses to which the despatch of Sir Hamilton Seymour called the attention of the Four Powers;—abuses for which the Pope himself is far less responsible than the fallible Italian Ministers by whom he is surrounded. Neither will I disguise my apprehension that the Roman Cabinet, with a view to political purposes—with a view more especially to the conciliation of England, may be occasionally induced to recommend to his Holiness certain compliances of which a recent example has been perhaps afforded. But to return to Sir Hamilton Seymour; his despatch reflects, I think, great honour upon Lord Palmerston; the merit, however, is not undivided, for it belongs in part to the right honourable baronet the Secretary of State for the Home Department (Sir J. Graham), himself a member of the Reform Cabinet, with whose concurrence it is indisputable that this course was adopted. . . . Yours is the praise (the merit of originality is all your own) of having been the first to stretch the statute of Anne, founded on a statute passed during the Commonwealth, into an instrumentality of this kind. You might have found in the history of the Commonwealth something with regard to Italy more deserving of your imitation. At the hazard of exposing the peace of Europe, your republican forefathers made Sardinia quail, and rescued a portion of her subjects from the persecution of which they were the victims; and if all England was animated by the sentiment to

which the greatest writer in your language has given an immortal expression—if 200 years ago your republican predecessors were fired by the fearless passion for religious freedom, is it fitting that their descendants should not only be insensible to the cause of civil liberty, but that they should become the auxiliaries of despotism, that they should lend an aid so sinister to crush the men who have aspired to be as you are, and that by an instrumentality so deplorable, they should do their utmost to aid in the oppression of a country in whose freedom those who are in the enjoyment of true liberty can never be unconcerned? Where is the man who has ever looked on Italy—that beautiful Italy, to whose peculiar loveliness her calamities have been so justly ascribed, in that famous sonnet of which your own Byron has composed so noble a translation; where is the man who has any acquaintance with the history of that celebrated people, and more especially with the annals of those glorious republics, by which the models of your own municipal institutions were supplied; where is the man who knows how much Italy has accomplished for the perfection of every art and the advancement of every science—how much has been achieved by Italy, not only in the embellishment of the human mind, but in its expansion and elevation; where is he whom Galileo has ever helped to look farther into heaven; or who has been appalled, or thrilled, or enchanted by those masterpieces in literature, writ in the most melodious language in the world, by which the wonders of antiquity have been emulated, if indeed in some instances they have not been surpassed, or to speak of objects more immediately within the cognizance of us all—where, I will venture to ask, is the man who has ever traversed the repository of art in the centre of your own metropolis, and beheld its walls glowing with the attestations to the supremacy of Italian genius,—who has not mourned over the fall of unfortunate Italy, and for her restoration to liberty and to glory, and for her resumption of the place which she ought to occupy amongst the nations of the earth, has not offered up a prayer?"

Sentiments like these were not likely to have created beforehand a favourable feeling towards him amongst the partizans of reaction.

But looks askance and cynical stares, meant no doubt to quell the plebeian's self-reliance in his heart, produced on him no perceptible effect. He had taken his own way, and was not to be laughed or sneered out of it.

Dining one day at the house of Mr. Sloane, he met a gentleman named Honan, well known as one of the foreign correspondents of the *Times*. When dinner was announced, precedence was of course given to the Minister. He drew back, and with a significant gesture intimated that he would follow Mr. Honan. There was a moment's hesitation, when Sheil said, "I have the honour, it is true, to be an envoy of England, but you represent the commonwealth of letters, which comprehends all nations." His love of pleasantry as often manifested itself among those to whom he was a total stranger, as when he was in the society of his own countrymen. "His knowledge of French exempted him from many of the sarcasms habitually levelled at British diplomatists, and Sheil, who had spent a purely House of Commons' life, conversed not only fluently but spiritedly in French.

His native wit did not desert him by being transplanted, and some of his French *mots* were fully equal to his best English ones. His career at Florence was singularly uneventful, and he seemed but too happy to enjoy the first holiday in a long life of labour."*

He had not been long at Florence when his attention was called to the case of Count Guicciardini, who had been cast into prison on a charge of disrespect to the religion of the State. The only fact alleged as the ground of this accusation, was his having been found by the police in a private dwelling with a few other persons engaged in the perusal of the Scriptures in the Protestant version, and in mutually explaining their contents. The case was one in which the English Minister could not directly interfere; but his warmest instances were addressed to more than one member of the Tuscan Government on the subject. He represented the impolicy as well as the injustice of the course pursued towards the gentleman in question. To the latter consideration he found little disposition to assent. Nonconformity in the official ethics of the Grand-ducal Court was regarded as an

* Letter from Charles Lever, Esq., dated Florence, 26th February, 1854.

aggravated form of sedition; and no remonstrance, therefore, was likely to prove effectual that appealed merely to a sense of truth and right. To other motives M. Baldassaroni and his colleagues were more susceptible; and after some time they appear to have been brought to understand the detriment which such proceedings was calculated to occasion the Government of Tuscany in the eyes of enlightened Europe. His expostulations, however, were offered with scrupulous regard to privacy, in order that they might be the more efficacious. The result justified the use of this discretion, and on the 19th May an order was issued liberating the prisoners from confinement.

Count Guicciardini had no personal intercourse with the British Minister until after his liberation. In a letter written some time afterwards he says—"The day before I left Florence we had a long conversation—more than two hours in duration—which I shall always remember with feelings of gratitude and respect. When I was in prison, suffering from the religious persecution which had broken out in my country, Mr. Sheil sent Mr. Thompson, the English vice-consul at Leghorn, to tell me, that if I had been an English subject, he would have come himself to see me, and have taken me under his protection, and set

me at liberty immediately. Touched by this proof of kindness, I felt it to be my duty to wait upon him and to thank him for his sympathy, taking advantage of the brief space allowed me before my departure. I was received with the greatest courtesy; he asked me for all the details of my case, and also an account of the persecution since the commencement, from the proceeding against the editor of the N. R., printed by Captain Packenham, about whom he was interested, that he might obtain from the Tuscan Government such reparation as he thought necessary to solicit for the protection of British subjects. He told me also, that he was very glad to hear that all these examples of religious persecution had nothing to do with politics; that he regretted much this state of things; that he knew what many endured; that he had worked for the emancipation of the Catholics in England; and that he desired, for the honour of religion, the same freedom for Protestants in all Catholic countries; that it was to be hoped wiser counsels in the Government would accord to the Tuscans complete liberty of conscience and worship; that he desired to influence the present administration of Tuscany in these views; but that, in the meantime, the people must be patient and obedient to those in authority, not only to the

'just, but to the unjust.' During my conversation with Mr. Sheil, he quoted a number of passages from the Holy Scriptures, which proved to me he knew them, and understood them in their spirit. I held out my hand, and said to him, I rejoiced in having this opportunity of knowing not only a gentleman and a man of talent, but what was still better, a Christian, who adored God in spirit and in truth. He then told me that he had family prayers every morning and evening, reading a Roman Catholic version of the Scriptures. He seemed to me to be deeply impressed with sentiments of piety, devotion, and love of God; and when I heard that he died only four days after my interview with him, I was much pleased that I had known him, and I felt convinced that, through the true Christ, he had entered into life eternal."*

On the day this interview took place, Mr. Sheil addressed a despatch to Lord Palmerston, from which the following is an extract:—"I have seen Count Guicciardini; that nobleman was arrested on a charge of having attended a meeting of Italians, not comprising more than six persons, I believe, for purposes adverse to the Roman Catholic religion. When he

* Letter to the author from Count Guicciardini, Teignmouth, 26th January, 1854.

was confined I obtained access to him for some of his friends. He has since been ordered to quit Tuscany for six months, and came to thank me, before leaving Florence, for the favour which I had rendered him." On the 3rd of June, Lord Palmerston addressed Mr. Scarlett, as Secretary of Legation, inclosing a formal despatch on the subject, which had been originally addressed to Mr. Sheil, expressing his belief, "that very much owing to his good offices Count Guicciardini and his friends had been released, and had been permitted to leave Tuscany."

"Inclosure in No. 2.

"VISCOUNT PALMERSTON TO MR. SHEIL.

"*Foreign Office, June*, 1851.

"SIR,—I have to acquaint you that a deputation of the Evangelical Alliance Society, headed by Sir Culling Eardley, came to me a few days ago, to ask the good offices of her Majesty's Government on behalf of Count Guicciardini, a Tuscan nobleman, descended from the well-known historian of that name. They said that Count Guicciardini has for some time past been a convert to the Protestant faith, but had not till lately been molested on that account, but that when he saw the recent edict which the

Grand Duke published on his return from Naples and Rome, and by which extraordinary powers were given to the police, he thought it would be prudent for him to leave Tuscany, and he accordingly went to Leghorn, intending there to embark for England.

"At Leghorn, however, he met some of his fellow-countrymen who hold the same religious opinions with himself; and he, together with five or six of these persons, met together in a private room, in a private house, for the purpose of divine worship according to their creed. They had been, however, watched by the police, and eight of that body having forced an entrance into the house, seized, arrested, and sent them to prison; and I have since been informed that Count Guicciardini (and the others have probably shared his fate) has been sentenced to six months' imprisonment in the unhealthy district called the Maremma, where during the summer and autumn it is scarcely possible that any person should be confined without great injury to their health, if not with danger to their lives.

"I stated to the above-mentioned deputation that the case being one between the Tuscan Government and a subject of the Grand Duke, there was no ground upon which her Majesty's Government could

rest any claim to interfere in favour of Count Guicciardini, however unjust and oppressive they may think the treatment of which he has been the victim; but that if it should be in the power of her Majesty's Government to render any assistance to Count Guicciardini, I should not fail to take advantage of any opportunity of doing so which might present itself.

"These gentlemen then announced their intention of making a representation to the Tuscan Minister at Paris, and to the Austrian *Chargé d'Affaires* at this Court; and they said that if such representations should be unavailing, they should then appeal to the sympathy of the British nation, and endeavour to bring public opinion in this country to bear upon the moral sense of the Tuscan Government.

"In the present unfortunate state of antagonism in this country between Catholic and Protestant, it is much to be wished that no fresh incident should occur still further to widen the breach which has unhappily been reopened between those two sections of Christians; and it is plain that any glaring instance of persecution by Catholic authorities, practised towards Protestants, must tend still further to inflame the animosity which recent acts of the Pope have excited in this country towards the papal system.

"For these reasons I have to instruct you, that if you should be able to bring the case of Count Guicciardini, unofficially, privately, and confidentially to the attention of the Tuscan Government, with a view to obtain a remission of Count Guicciardini's sentence, you would be rendering a service to the general interests of religion.

"I apprehend that Count Guicciardini would be glad to be allowed to leave Tuscany immediately; and therefore if any practices of his have been proved to be contrary to the Tuscan laws, the sentence which has been passed upon him, and which has already been carried into a commencement of execution, might be deemed to be a sufficient vindication of those laws, while his departure from the Grand Duchy would be an effectual security against a repetition of those practices by him within the territorial limits to which those laws apply."*

The climate of Tuscany seemed likely to agree with him as well as with Mrs. Sheil, and though threatened occasionally with a return of his accustomed malady, he had begun, as spring advanced, to take more exer-

* Correspondence between the British Minister at Florence and the Foreign Office, respecting the case of Count Guicciardini, presented in 1854.

cise, and to feel enjoyment in the open air. He looked forward sanguinely to renovated strength and spirits, and his never-sleeping fancy was recommencing its old occupations—weaving for him dreamlike scenes of new exertion, and peopling them with forms dissimilar from those that once were wont to come and go in airy palpability in younger days. Suddenly the frown of death overshadowed him, and in one brief hour of suffering, regrets and hopes, dreams and projects, memories of triumph, and aspirations after further fame and usefulness, vanished into nothing.

On the 21st of May, a letter from Mr. R. M. Bellew brought him the intelligence of the sudden death, under circumstances peculiarly painful, of Mr. Power, the eldest son of Mrs. Sheil, who for many years represented the county of Waterford in Parliament. The shock which this event naturally occasioned did not, in the first instance, produce any serious effect upon his outward frame; but the revulsion of feeling which it caused undoubtedly rendered him more than ordinarily susceptible to the attack of his inveterate foe. On Sunday the 25th, he rose at his usual hour, and did not complain while dressing, of being conscious of any symptom of illness. He was preparing to go out when he was suddenly seized with gout in its

most aggravated form. Medical assistance was immediately sent for, and in a short time M. Zanetti, one of the most eminent practitioners of the place, was in attendance; but he was unable to administer any effectual relief to the sufferer, who seems never to have rallied, and who, in little more than an hour, had ceased to breathe.

His funeral obsequies were performed in the church of St. Michael, on Wednesday the 28th, whence his remains were subsequently removed to Leghorn, and thence borne in a British ship of war to Ireland, where he had expressed a wish to be interred. They were placed, on arriving at Dublin, on the 24th of February, in the Jesuits' church in Gardiner Street, and on the following day they were removed to their final resting-place at Long Orchard. Some steps were taken in the course of the following year for the erection of a public monument to his memory; and it is hoped that the design, although deferred, has not been laid aside.

THE END.

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